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TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF  
MALE SEXUALITY AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE  
AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CULTURE

by  
David M. Lyke

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

January

1990



This thesis is dedicated  
to my father, Arthur Laverne Lyke (Leo),  
who, in spite of never really knowing his father,  
has been a "good-enough" father to me.  
It is from his love for my mother and "us boys"  
that this thesis is born.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Dr. Paul Giblin and Dr. James Zullo for their direction and aid in the preparation of this thesis. Special thanks is extended to Cheryl A. Furtak, M.A. for her invaluable help and patience in the editing and typing of this thesis. Finally, to my wife, friends, classmates and fellow interns who, on finding me lighthearted, had the courtesy to ask me how it was going, and on finding me distraught, had the compassion to say nothing and let it be.

## PREFACE

As I began to complete this thesis, I was reminded of Chapter One in John Steinbeck's Travels with Charley. I adapt his thoughts about travel to the process of writing, "the thesis".

"When the dreams of writing a thesis begin to take possession of an enthusiastic man, the road to completion seems easy, straight, and sweet. The dreamer must first find in himself good and sufficient reason for writing. For the practical dreamer, this is not too difficult. He has a built in resource of reasons to choose from. Next, he must plan his topic in time and space, choose a direction and a destination. And last, he must implement the writing. What to write, how to write it and how long to take to write it are a part of the process that is invariable and immortal.

But once a thesis is imagined, and outlined, and put in words, a new factor enters and takes over. A thesis is an entity different from all other writing. It has a personality, temperament, individuality, and uniqueness to itself. A thesis is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing and coercion are fruitless. I find after months of struggle that I don't create a thesis; a thesis makes me. Personal schedules, thesis directors, and administrative deadlines, polished and inevitable, dash themselves to wreckage on the personality of the thesis. Only when I

began to recognize this could the shattered dreamer in me go along with it. Only then have my frustrations and anxieties begun to fall away. In this sense my thesis has been like my marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think I can control it. I feel better now having said this, although only those who have experienced it will understand."

Thanks for having said it so well, Mr. Steinbeck.

## VITA

The author, David Michael Lyke, is the second of four sons of Leo and Barbara Lyke. He was born December 25, 1955, in Torrington, Wyoming.

His elementary education was obtained in the public and parochial schools of Garland, Texas. His secondary education was completed in 1974 at South Garland High School, Garland, Texas.

In August of 1974, Mr. Lyke entered the University of Dallas on a full tuition scholarship. While attending the University of Dallas he played intercollegiate baseball and was active in the student government. He was also a Resident Advisor. In May of 1978, graduating cum laude, Mr. Lyke received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Politics.

Mr. Lyke entered Holy Trinity Seminary in January of 1980 and was conferred the degree of Masters of Divinity in May of 1983 from the University of Dallas. He was ordained to priesthood for the Diocese of Dallas in April of the same year. Ministerially, he spent five years as a pastoral associate in two parishes in the diocese and one year in the Archdiocese of Chicago.



In September of 1987, Mr. Lyke entered Loyola University of Chicago's Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling Program. He received an assistantship from the Charles I. Doyle Center enabling him to complete his Master of Arts in January of 1990.

Mr. Lyke is currently married to Gina Renee George and is employed by Omni Youth and Family Counseling Services in Arlington Heights, Illinois as a pastoral counselor.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF DEFINING MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY

#### Introduction

A look at the growing literature of men's studies indicates that a re-evaluation of what it means to be male in the American Christian Culture is taking place.<sup>1</sup> This re-evaluation is the result of both insight and action. In part, conscious attitudes and pervading, deliberate courses of action over the last two decades have contributed to a recognizable crisis affecting masculine identity and male moral development.<sup>2</sup> Like any crisis, this crisis cuts

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<sup>1</sup>By American Christian Culture or American Christian Society I mean to base this thesis on what seems to be some predominantly Christian values and some historical American ideals. I am not trying to argue that American ideals are necessarily Christian values, nor vice versa. What I am trying to illustrate is one perspective of the cultural experience with which I am familiar. That perspective is the intermingling of American constitutionalism with faithfully trying to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unless otherwise stated, my discussion is limited to that intermingling of American ideals and Christian values. I am not trying to distinguish between the spectrum of political views whether they be labeled liberal or conservative or republican or democratic, nor am I attempting to distinguish between Catholic and Protestant, or fundamentalist or mainline denominational attitudes. Through this project of delineation, I wish to paint some broad strokes of what these two factors contribute to the general discussion of male sexuality.

<sup>2</sup>The more conscious attitudes of women's rights and gay liberation have formed very strategic coalitions within their own ranks which have made their impact on the way gender, sex roles, and sexuality are understood. Within the past thirty years both groups have

to the heart of its subject. Thus, the question of what it means to be male in the world, presents itself as a daring challenge complete with inherent hazards and opportunities.

To meet this crisis involves a heart-rendering struggle to be present to the pain of an evolutionary process. Meeting the crisis also challenges the analytical mind to investigate the phenomena from an objective, scientific, point of view. This two-fold challenge is a risky venture. The danger of addressing the issue of an evolving masculine identity suggests that by naming it, it can no longer be ignored. Furthermore, once the subject under scrutiny is named as such, it is no longer the same. Consequently, resistance toward the new and retrenchment in the old is apt to occur. To push the point further and assert that a new masculine identity is coming of age, expresses an anticipated hope that the process of human individuation will find nuanced a purpose for the present and the future. Still, the dilemma remains: how does one grapple with the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the unity and the diversity of human thought and action? The experience is a "tremendum et fascinans" of what it means to be wholly human.<sup>3</sup>

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formed powerful political camps. Based on valid research and strategical planning they have affected decisions and the quality of life in American politics and Christian churches. Both movements have also made their impact on research and technical scholarship.

<sup>3</sup>I borrow from Rudolph Otto's, "Idea of the Holy". Conscious consideration of what it means to be male in this present society is a frightening and fascinating experience. It is frightening because it questions many presumptions about our world and shows how destructive these presumptions have been. It is a fascinating experience because it shows the rich possibilities which might be realized

### Preliminary Observations

This thesis articulates one male's integration of the ongoing dialogue between the challenges of changing male sexual identity and living out this identity within the context of a particular culture. This thesis focuses on the confusion and the enlightenment of what it means to be male and what it means to act morally as a man in the present world. The locus of discussion centers on an understanding of male sexuality. Particularly, an alternative view of what it means to be male is presented, based on an integrative critique of the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and James Nelson is presented.

Specifically, this thesis illustrates the duality that is present in men's sexual and moral experience. Kohlberg's theory exemplifies one side of the duality, which emphasizes rational abstraction and universal generalization. His theory of masculinity accentuates principled thinking and autonomous action. In some sense, Kohlberg's theory more strongly focuses on what will later be described as a "justice and rights orientation" toward moral development. Kohlberg provides insight for viewing masculine moral development by the way he has typed male development and the moral decision making process.

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in the formation of human relationships and understanding. In a true sense, this discussion is my attempt to understand my own masculinity, from an integrated perspective.

James Nelson's understanding of male sexuality attempts to balance the duality of men's experience by stressing body awareness and situational concreteness. His observations of male sexuality indicate an innate, yet repressed, desire for what will later be described as an "ethic of care and relationship".

### The Purpose of This Study

The implications that have surfaced in a review of the mutual contributions and critiques of Kohlberg and Nelson give reference to particular issues. The issues of pleasure, heterosexual relationships, male friendship, fatherhood, and mortality, contribute to the larger wholistic discussion. Any authentic emergence of the intimate and generative male in the midst of the present search, must confront the implications of these issues. Without confrontation the task of addressing the issue of an evolving masculine identity will fail.

As new attitudes and behaviors regarding sex, sexuality, intimacy, gender roles, and spirituality begin to take flesh in our world, a more promising, creative male is more likely to evolve. The purpose of this study is to support this evolving male as one who will be flexible and secure; one who can effect and be affected by the society in which he lives; and, one who will draw from the wellspring of life and give it back again. This new, evolving, male

will be a man generative of virtue and principle, as well as a man of intimate relationships.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Bernard Loomer, "S-I-Z-E," Criterion vol. 13 no. 3, Spring 1974, p. 21. Also, by the same author, "Two Kinds of Power," Criterion vol. 15 no. 1, Winter 1976), pp. 14-21.



## CHAPTER II

### CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS IMPINGING ON MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY

#### Introduction

Being male, ethical, and moral, and acting in the American Christian Culture, resides in the growing awareness that classical understandings of sexuality are no longer sufficient.<sup>5</sup> Like women, men find themselves in a transitional time complete with confusion and inconsistency. The nature and meaning of human sexual relationships and behavior are put to question, lacking their more traditional structures. In a sense, human sexuality presents a good news/bad news picture to those who recognize human sexuality as a topic of concern in our culture. A few thematic representations help to illustrate the assertion, the way human sexuality is understood in this culture is confusing to most men and women as well.

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph Pleck, The Myth of Masculinity (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1981).

## Cultural Good News Perspectives of Sexuality

In our culture, the pervasiveness of sex-consciousness extends from the most incidental of human encounters to the most profound moral decisions human beings make. Our sex-consciousness is evidenced in subtle ways. For example, the first aspect people seem to notice about another human being is whether they are male or female. This is true even though some generic externals, i.e., clothing, haircuts, jewelry, etc., might make it difficult to immediately distinguish another's gender. Research reports that recognition of sexual identity is of primary importance in even the most incidental of human encounters.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, work, business, and advertising have learned to capitalize on this aspect, finding it profitable to acutely focus on sex-consciousness, whether that be for marketing, economic, or legal reasons.<sup>7</sup> Sex-consciousness is evidenced in what have become the most hotly debated issues of homosexuality, AIDS, gender roles and sex discrimination suits. Other evidence is even more subtle, such

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<sup>6</sup>These observation were suggested to me by Craydon McDonald, D.Min., Ph.D. In my own observations and non-clinical research I have found that most men as well as women note this as the case. This does not mean that their answers to what they noticed first about another person were straightforwardly, "male or female". In fact, answers that I received were more about anatomical features such as eyes, arms, legs, hair, etc. But, when questioned further, almost all subjects admitted that gender differentiation was an almost immediate and automatic association.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph H. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role: Definitions, Problems and Sources of Change," Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 32, No. 3, (1976), pp. 155-164.

as the questions of abortion, racism, violence, and environmental abuse. Blatant or subtle, the roots of the most popular issues of our day can be traced to sexual issues. Sex-consciousness pervades our everyday world in many ways.

A look at sex-consciousness leads to its thematic counterpart, i.e., sex, education. From a good news perspective, it is increasingly clear that the American Christian Culture has become a sex-educated culture. Foundationally, the sexual revolution of the Sixties has brought to our day ongoing research and literature that has broadened our understanding of reproductive factors and genital expressions of sexuality. A desire for satisfying sexual experiences has given impetus to a plethora of "love making" manuals. These materials have emerged over the past decades and now line the shelves of psychology and family care sections in most ordinary book stores. Concurrently, a number of sex clinics and an openness to their curative therapies has increased in the last 20 years.<sup>8</sup>

With the sexual revolution came a broadened tolerance for societal mores about what could be researched, written, published and read about, regarding sexuality. Subsequently, as a whole, society has become more educated about what was seen in an earlier Victorian period as something that was purely and simply a private matter.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Domeena C. Renshaw, M.D., "Helping Patients with Sex Problems in the 1980's" Psychosomatics, March 1982, Vol. 23, Num. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality and Spirituality, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1988), p. 128-129.

A third thematic representation illustrates that narrow understandings of human sexuality have been expanded to include sex-differentiation as a positive compliment. By sex-differentiation, I mean that the culture has come to distinguish and affirm the biological characteristics and genetic attitudes which validate the historical position that sexual differences are meant to be celebrated. We might not celebrate differences well, but our culture has begun to recognize the importance and is learning to take action. At times, sex-differentiation has gone to the extreme of rigid gender roles and destructive, pathological stereotypes. At the same time, this evolving position re-asserts that differences are necessary, believing that diversity completes universality.

Sex-differentiation admits that the word, "sex" is really a biological term that identifies a person as either female or male pending their sex organs and genes. A common understanding of the biological term supports the culture's recognition that sex differences are a fact of life. Additionally, these differences, with their determined biological functions, present certain non-negotiables. For example, women can menstruate, gestate, and lactate while men cannot. Men can impregnate while women cannot.<sup>10</sup> Cultural awareness about this aspect of distinct bodily experience is important because it is a significant determinant in our lives.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 20-21. I use James Nelson's definitions of sex, gender, and sex role.

Afterall, not all of who we are is determined by psyche nor society alone.

Conversely, sex-differentiation is important from the opposite perspective. The distinction of the terms "sex", "gender" and "sex role" remind us that our basic identity and behaviors are not simply determined by our biology. Just as "sex" is a biological term, "gender" is a psychological term. Gender refers to the subjective feelings of maleness or femaleness (gender identity); to the social evaluation of behaviors as masculine or feminine (gender role); and, to the social expectations applied to persons of a given biological sex (gender sex roles).

Sex-differentiation, when clearly understood in our culture, affirms the duality and complementarity of human experiences. Biologically and psychologically, sex-differentiation states the facts, as it were, in an effort to reduce, if not eliminate, competitive, combative, dualism. In short, the "superior" can no longer dominate the "inferior".

A fourth thematic representation of "Good News" illustrates that the American Christian Culture is becoming sexually diverse and flexible. As a culture endowed with technical specialists, we have come to rely on the expertise of others. The willingness to trust others who have specialized knowledge of verifiable research and accreditation frees us to rely on the resources of the community

rather than rely on our own means. One example of such flexibility and openness is the increased tolerance for sex education programs in public and private schools.

Another example of flexibility and openness is the accommodating attitudes that have developed over the past decades toward parenting and work roles. Current research findings support that traditional roles of females as housemakers and males as breadwinners are changing.<sup>11</sup> The increasing flexibility and pressure to change the traditional concepts has risen proportionally with greater equality in responsibilities and opportunities for each sex.

Less rigid sex and gender roles are also evidenced by the increasing number of households in which both spouses are employed. For assorted reasons, dual career couples have become a viable, accepted option. Subsequently, this encourages ongoing change in attitudes that will require flexibility and diversity from the culture.

A final thematic representation illustrates that we are a sexually-integrative culture. By integrative, I mean that the culture has begun to recognize that human sexuality cannot be viewed in isolation, separated from other aspects and ingredients of life. Furthermore, the American Christian Culture has begun to recognize

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<sup>11</sup>See Susan A. Basow, Gender Stereotypes: Traditions and Alternatives, 2nd ed. (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1986).

that the present concern about human sexual identity and behavior resonates with previous historical periods.<sup>12</sup>

The American Medical and Psychiatric Communities demonstrate these efforts by the way they have continued to advance in developing an understanding of the complex processes of human relationships and human reproduction.<sup>13</sup> The decreased mortality rate of infants, the increased possibility of responsible fertilization and sterilization techniques, and the increased attempt to meet the needs of the whole person in any type of medical care give witness to such advancements. Efforts of both the "hard" and "soft" sciences have successfully begun to grapple with the meaning of human sexuality and the treatment of the whole person in a collaborative way. On another level, this collaboration appears to have accelerated the ethical debate regarding the meaning of human sexual behavior and the question of human sexual identity.

Nonetheless, the quest to understand human sexuality is not reserved for scientific experts alone. It is also the subject of concern for lay persons in their every day experience and practical thinking about ethical issues in their own lives. The debates of

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<sup>12</sup>Michael S. Kimmel, "Teaching About Men", Journal of the National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Summer, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>A. Rossi, "A Biosocial Perspective on Parenting," Daedulus 166 (Spring 1977), p. 1-31; and consequent responses from M. McClinock and J. Sayers, in The Making of Masculinities, Harry Brod, ed., (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1987), Chapter 11, pp. 259-260, notes 1-8.

abortion, pro-life and pro-choice, are ones that touch the core of what people consciously and unconsciously value about themselves. The daily choices of quality of life and sanctity of life are sexual issues. They are formed in the consciences of both the scientist and the naturalist.<sup>14</sup> Cardinal Joseph Bernadin of Chicago, provides a helpful metaphor in this regard.<sup>15</sup> The American Christian Culture seems to long for a "seamless garment" that will effectively integrate human sexuality with the rest of life. This integration will promote the profound regard for human dignity and the vast potential of the human person. It will be non-exclusively available to all of humanity. The clearest indication of this deep-seated longing is found in the diverse ways our culture attempts to understand pleasure, relationships, and death. Even an unsophisticated observation of what the media and advertising industry offer the public indicates how deeply individuals and communities long to integrate their sexuality in a meaningful and productive way.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Though the nature-nurture controversy is a somewhat interesting perspective, its fruitfulness is rather sterile. The "sterility" of this debate is noted by Perry Treadwell, "Biological Influences on Masculinity", quoting Paul Brain, in The Making of Masculinities, Harry Brod, ed., p. 284.

<sup>15</sup>"The Seamless Garment" metaphor is taken from Cardinal Joseph Bernadin's reflection on the sanctity of life issues present in our contemporary society. He believes that all "right to life" issues are integrally connected.

<sup>16</sup>Hal Lyon, Tenderness is Strength: From Machismo to Manhood, (CA: Harper & Row, 1978); Frank Rose and George Bennet, Real Man: Sex and Style in an Uncertain Age, (NY: Doubleday, 1980); Evelyn Shapiro and Barry Shapiro, The Women Say The Men Say: The Women's Liberation Movement and Men's Consciousness, (Delta, 1979).



### Problematic Cultural Views of Sexuality

Not all within the American Christian Culture's understanding of sexuality is Good News. Having reviewed some optimistic representations, we are now humbly challenged to recognize some rather embarrassingly Bad News reflected in our culture.<sup>17</sup>

An austere fact remains: our American Christian Culture has an obsessive preoccupation with human sexuality. This narrowly focused attitude of utility toward sexuality is most often equated with genital sex. The tendency to look at self and at other as an object for sex pervades in a variety of ways. Male preoccupation with penis size and female preoccupation with perfect breasts limits sexuality to a function of genital fitness on a physical and aesthetic level. Most revealing in the growing industry of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery is the likelihood that efforts to increase one's desirability on a genital level are, more probably, indicators of genital and sexual dissatisfaction. Physical externals dominate the criterion for sexual acceptance.

Furthermore, the pubescent attitude that one must express oneself genitally in order to discover one's own masculinity or femininity has been met with the misinformed idea that sex education

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<sup>17</sup>I am indebted to Mr. Robert Rutledge, ACSW, Professor Loyola University of Chicago, Department of Social Work for a majority of these observations in this section. The context of these observations are from his course in Couple's Therapy, Spring 1989, Loyola University of Chicago.

will "make it right". It is no wonder that sex education for the sole purpose of teaching biological factors of reproduction and genital expressions of sexuality, misses the mark for a panoptic understanding of human sexuality. Human sexuality encompasses more than reproduction and intercourse. An overly genital approach to sexuality fails to include a healthy view of one's self-concept and learned sex-role behaviors complimentary to genital sexual behavior.

The myopic vision of sexuality, as noted earlier, purports that the only part of human sexuality that is important is one's "sex appeal". An understanding of sexuality that includes sexual behavior and sex-gender-role characteristics recognizes the broader role of learned attitudes and behaviors. These attitudes and behaviors are formed and influenced by familial and social contexts. Sex education programs whose sole foci are biological factors of reproduction and genital expressions of sexuality ignore this reality.

A second thematic representation of Bad News illustrates that we are a sexually automatic and disposable culture. The number of items on the market that promote "quick, clean, and safe sex" exacerbate the automation and disposability of sexual relationships. Casual sex without significant human communication, often suggests that human sexuality is a separate part of life. Human sexuality seems to be something that one can take off and put on indiscriminately. Sexuality becomes so "automatic" that nothing has to be

learned about it. The idea that, "when the time comes you will know what to do," exemplifies this attitude.

It is no wonder, then, that parents who see sexuality in this way have no regard for the need to educate their children. At the least, the need is limited. What parents of this view fail to realize is that while human, sexual response is natural, it is an integral part of the whole person. It is not totally automatic, but requires foresight. Parents of this mentality must not ignore that the age at which their children experience their sexuality will be uniquely their own and largely a result of learned behavior.

The research of Alfred C. Kinsey shows that children discover their sexuality at an early age.<sup>18</sup> This includes the child's sexual-identification of differences between being male and female. Sexuality, then, even in its most fundamental level, becomes a part of the growing identity of the child.

With the onset of puberty and the development of gender characteristics in adolescence, the drive for sexual expression often becomes a conflict between parent and child. Conflict manifests itself in a variety of ways not shown in earlier years. Frequently, sexuality becomes the medium by which the adolescent exercises autonomy and independence.

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<sup>18</sup>Alfred C. Kinsey, et al. Sexual Behaviors in the Human Male, Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, 1948; and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, 1953.

At this time, parental child-rearing attitudes about sexuality begin to show their ramifications. If parents have presented sexuality as something that is automatic and separate from the rest of life, their offspring may be ill-prepared to cope with the onset of puberty. Because sexuality is intimately connected with self-identity and is concretely manifested in expressions of affection in relationships, parents must communicate with their children at an early age. When this does not transpire, children are left on their own, struggling to negotiate the confusions and inconsistencies of the past without caring support of parents. In other words, adolescents get most confused when sexuality is taken out of its life context and treated as a somehow automatic (separate) and unrelated (disposable) experience to the rest of life. Healthy parental attitudes expressed consistently, early on in the child's life can have a positive effect on the child's later struggles.

A third thematic representation illustrates that we are a sexually intolerant culture. This phenomenon has become particularly evident in the women's liberation and the gay liberation movements. Reactions to these movements have often been met with ridicule and violence. That the culture appears intolerant of the capacity for the unique identity of women and her diverse roles that influence the way economic and political life is shaped, is an indictment against the spirit of freedom engendered in the founding

of American Constitutionalism.<sup>19</sup> That homophobia is an epidemic threat to those who have not been able to value same sex relationships is a pathological indication of the ethical inconsistencies of a sexist and patriarchal society.<sup>20</sup>

Both the women's liberation and the gay liberation movements have exposed the culture's rigidity and stereotyping of male and female sex roles. These sex roles have traditionally been separate and unequal.<sup>21</sup> In this culture, females are expected to be home and child-oriented, affectionate, temperamental and dependent. Women are to appear submissive and weaker than men. Males are expected to be competitive, unemotional, aggressive, independent and autocratic. Traditionally, females are the homemakers and caretakers while males are the breadwinners. The difficulty with this stereotypical characterization of male-female roles is that these characterizations become incorporated into the attitudes and self-concepts of children in a rigidly presumptuous way. Children begin to get the sense that close, exclusive male to male relationships are not to be encouraged at the expense of autonomous job performance, while females are not to expect they can take part in important and autonomous work at the expense of domestic relationships.

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<sup>19</sup>Basow, Gender Stereotypes, Chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup>George Weinberg, Society and the Healthy Homosexual, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1972).

<sup>21</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 19, (note 12 especially).

The change in sex-role expectations is difficult and painful for many people because it challenges value systems and the ethical assumptions present in one's world. The demand for greater equality in responsibilities and opportunities for each sex, with less rigid sex roles, is met with violent resistance toward change by those who have benefitted most from the traditional arrangement.

To recognize that not all have benefitted from the traditional arrangement, but in actuality, have been oppressed by the present presumptuous politics, is a cause for shame and guilt in our culture. Subsequently, shame and guilt effects blame and is projected onto others; creating conflict in the most stable of institutions, particularly in the family.

At issue is not only behavior, but the self identity of males and females, male/male relationships, female/female relationships, and female/male relationships. At present the intolerance of the American Christian Culture for new sex and gender roles are fraught with confusion and inconsistencies. Adults must understand their own views about sex and gender roles in an effort to minimize their own internal inconsistencies. Adults must understand they are learning and growing along with their children.

A final thematic representation illustrates that we are a no-talk culture.<sup>22</sup> A no-talk culture has difficulty expressing feelings and thoughts about human sexuality. This disability in our culture fails to admit that we have limits and that we can place limits properly, contrary to "comfortable" discussion about sexuality. Sex and sexuality continue to be topics that adults and children cannot talk about.

While the "sexual revolution" has afforded an "openness", very little guidance has been available to adults and children in helping them to discuss the issues of sexuality, gender roles and male/female relationships. Rather, for the most part, the "sexual revolution" has largely been a change in the tolerance for what merely can be written and published about sex.

For many people, sexuality is viewed as a problem of adolescence to be solved by setting and enforcing limits. This view supports the subtle expectation that sexual behavior ought to be forbidden and rigidly controlled. When sexuality is presented in this way, it is denied its appropriate life-context of self-identity and loving relationships.

Even though our society has increased its tolerance for sex education in public and private schools, adults have too often re-

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<sup>22</sup>The notion of a "no talk" culture is that of Professor Robert Rutledge. This is the most concise, apt description of discussion about sexuality in the culture that I have found.

lied totally on these programs to educate their children. These programs could be of greater benefit if they were viewed as a resource for parents in teaching their own children.

The independent research of R.A. Lewis and B. Spanier shows that children will be comfortable learning about sexuality and learning to make responsible decisions about their sexuality if parents, themselves, are comfortable talking and teaching about their own sexuality.<sup>23</sup> For the most part, this generation of adults has numerous taboos to overcome. When this adult generation takes the lead in teaching the coming generation, sexuality will assume its proper context in the growing and changing life cycle of persons who are in intimate and generative relationships with one another.

### Implications for Understanding Male Sexual Identity

From the preceding discussion of the present state of human sexuality in the American Christian Culture, some implications for the development of masculine identity and ethical behavior can be drawn. These implications are due, in part, to the fact that the rudimentary tenements of our culture have been predominantly constructed by the male population. This self-understanding of the

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<sup>23</sup>R.A. Lewis, "Parents and Peers: Socialization Agents in the Social Behavior of Young Adults," The Journal of Sex Research, 1963, 9, pp. 156-170; and B. Spanier, "Sources of Sex Information and Premarital Sexual Behavior," The Journal of Sex Research, 1977, 13, pp. 73-88.



culture has developed consciously at times, but even more unconsciously, most of the time.

Exactly what percentage of the present state of affairs is the actual consequence of specific, exclusive, male influence is debatable. It is often difficult to delineate cause from effect and dependence from co-dependence. Nonetheless, observation about how males in this culture behave can be submitted without the need to attribute culpability to any one factor. The observations can be organized along the following thematic lines:

1. Men are sensing that something is amiss in their sexuality.
2. Men are attempting to re-evaluate the meaning of their sexuality.
3. Men are realizing how narrowly focused discussion of sexuality has been in the past.
4. Men are desiring a more integrated and relational sexuality.
5. Men are beginning to challenge cultural presumptions of what it means to be male.
6. Men desire more and are actively seeking more imaginative approaches for intimacy and generativity that recognizes their uniqueness as males.

The contemporary situation of re-evaluating male sexual identity and behavior has begun out of the sense that there is something amiss in how men have seen themselves. Premature death, desire to know one's father, the need for close male friendships, the recognition of female's legitimate and powerful relationship to men in the

world, and the inability of men to enjoy their leisure are some indications that familiar concerns are well placed.

What is amiss is the grounding experience of intimate relationships and generative work that allows men to feel that the dreams of a better life for themselves and others is not just a vanity of vanities. Why those who have heard a voice have decided to act at all, realizing that this change will make them less secure, less comfortable, less certain, less in control, and less rational than what they have ever been before is in part a mystery. Yet, men who have decided to make this choice, have made it because previous attempts at rationalizing, controlling, absolutizing, rigidifying, and managing have failed magnificently. Failures bring about new attempts; radical failures bring about radical attempts.

Men have discovered in their failure of aggressive assertion that they must discover more relational ways of being. Men have had to face the reality that male dominance, power, aggression, and control keep them from knowing the wholeness they so desperately desire. The old ways of being and behaving are no longer valid because men have discovered how lonely and vulnerable they really are. The experiences of loneliness and vulnerability have been, in effect, blessings because men have begun to rediscover their own capacity for feeling emotions and knowing their own bodies. Knowing the connectedness of reason and feelings, mind and body, are the ingredients of re-evaluating the meaning of male sexual identity.

Traditionally, males have been expected to be physically strong, instrumental, goal-oriented, achievement focused, emotionally and interpersonally limited and dominant in relating to women.<sup>24</sup> Work is still seen as the primary criterion of a man's worth and self-esteem, and men's emotional expressiveness is still very restricted. Even though some changes in the male gender stereotype in our society places more emphasis on intellectual than physical strength and more on interpersonal skills and companion style relationships with women, some parts of the stereotype seem highly resistant to change. Even though a re-evaluation of the meaning of masculinity is occurring, the fact that men continue to enjoy many benefits from the system as it is, remains a tremendous obstacle for changing the system.<sup>25</sup> Hence, when thinking about the meaning of male sexual experience, a dichotomy pervades. More specifically, the range of problems men encounter are readily observed:

1. Men are goal oriented in sex. "It's orgasm that counts."
2. Men bring into the sex act numerous concerns about their technical performance. "Did I do well?" "Did I satisfy my partner?"
3. Men believe they must be in charge. They feel responsible for orchestrating the love making and feel responsible for its "success".
4. Men have difficulty communicating their own desires and limits.

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<sup>24</sup>Basow, Gender Stereotypes, Chapter 2 in particular.

<sup>25</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 19. This may explain why the new enterprise of "men's studies" is a rather small movement.

5. Men have an unusual concern for living up to their images of "normal" male sexual functioning and are terrified by the thought of "not being a real man."
6. Men have difficulty reading accurately their own emotional feelings about sex.
7. Men are uncomfortable with prolonged sensual play.
8. Men believe that all intimate physical contact should lead to genital sex and that they should always want it and be ready for it. And, they have a right to it.<sup>26</sup>

That men are confused about what it means to be a real man; that masculinity is in "a crisis" has become a cultural commonplace, staring down at us from every magazine rack and television talk show in the country.<sup>27</sup> The contemporary crisis in a historical perspective shows that men are,

increasingly bumping up against the limits of traditional concepts of masculinity, attempting to push beyond the rigid role prescriptions that constrain male behavior and prevent men from more fully expressing intimacy and vulnerability, becoming more devoted and loving fathers, more sensitive lovers, and more compassionate friends to both women and other men. The problem is that much of this "pop" psychology analysis reproduce the problem they intend to cure by focusing only on the relational construct of sex roles, without paying specific attention to men and masculinity as a social scientific problem in itself.<sup>28</sup>

The fact is that male sexual health is not a very encouraging picture. Men are found hurting and wanting in many areas of their lives. Men yearn for emotional intimacy with other males, yet find

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<sup>26</sup>Herb Goldberg, The New Male, (NY: William Morrow & Co., 1978), pp. 37-69.

<sup>27</sup>Michael S. Kimmel, "The Contemporary Crisis of Masculinity in Historical Perspective", in The Making of Masculinities, Harry Brod, ed., pp. 121-153.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

themselves unprepared, unequipped and fearful of that intimacy. They want relationships of genuine equality and mutuality with women, yet experience a crippling emotional dependency on women. Men recognize that much of their self worth is directly dependent on their occupational success.<sup>29</sup> They want for a "better world" and yet, in a world in which they dominate, in which they can effect change, they find themselves seemingly impotent, facing enormous social problems of violence, racism, poverty, human rights and environmental abuse.

Another arena for re-evaluation of the male sexual experience is friendship. Daniel Levinson claims that adult friendship with either men or women is something rarely experienced by American men.<sup>30</sup> The McGill Report on Male Intimacy<sup>31</sup> concludes that the male fear of self disclosure is pervasive in our society and that men's relationships are characterized by at least these things:

1. Men's friendships with other men tend to revolve around particular tasks, giving these friendships qualifying labels: "a work friend," "a golf friend," and so forth.
2. Men are more self disclosing to women than to other men and tend to rely upon women to be interpreters of their relationships and interior lives.
3. For men, sex seems the supreme intimacy and the notion of loving someone as an adult peer seems to imply a sexual relationship.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 121-153.

<sup>30</sup>Daniel J. Levinson, The Seasons of a Man's Life, (NY: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 12.

<sup>31</sup>Michael E. McGill, The McGill Report on Male Intimacy, (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985).

4. Because they relate to them competitively, fathers have a difficult time disclosing themselves emotionally and vulnerably to their sons.
5. Men use humor as a guise for intimacy and often as a defense against it.
6. Our culture gives men little guidance and few models concerning adult intimacy without genital sexual involvement.<sup>32</sup>

Though each of these problems are complicated in their genesis, each has important connections with distorted expressions of masculinity.

The common denominator of any of the problems listed above have prompted new ways of viewing the problems and focusing on solutions. Rather than looking at the problem from an external viewpoint, men are looking at it from an internal one. Rather than suggesting solutions that attempt to redefine social roles, men are attempting to re-evaluate what it truly means to be male, sexually and morally. Because of these areas of concern, many men have begun to re-evaluate their personal lives. Consequently, a men's liberation movement has slowly risen.<sup>33</sup>

Though, for the most part, the movement has not been driven to change the social system, the consciousness raising prompted by the movement has put in focus men's personal confusions and stresses and encouraged men to seek each other's support. The number of men in

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph H. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role: Definitions, Problems and Sources of Change", Journal of Social Issues, vol. 32, no. 3, 1976, pp. 155-164; also, Myth of Masculinity, 1981.

the movement is small but growing. Support groups, conferences, newsletters, journals, and books have begun to surface. What the beginning movement has demonstrated is how narrowly focused the discussion of male sexuality in the past has been.<sup>34</sup>

Prior to recent re-evaluation attempts, a paucity of material on the subject existed. Much theory and literature about male sexuality centered on theories of male sex-role identity. This theory dominated the social scientific study of sex roles in the 1950's and 1960's. The theory itself evolved from cultural concerns about American men's adequacy, beginning in the 1930's and first operationalized by masculinity-femininity tests rooted in the early twentieth century psychometric tradition. It was fueled by wartime concerns about draft disqualifications and battle breakdowns and postwar economic trends which threatened male provider roles. As the paradigm developed, it incorporated certain psychoanalytic concepts. These, in turn, were applied to social phenomena such as father absence and delinquency. Anomalous research results and new concepts of sex roles initiated by feminism beginning in the 1970's led to the pervading theory's demise.<sup>35</sup>

Currently, a new kind of study has been initiated. Men's work roles and the impact they have on their fathering functions have

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<sup>34</sup>Deryck Calderwood, "Male Sexual Health", Siecus Report, Vol. 13, No. 2, Nov. 1988, pp. 1-5.

<sup>35</sup>Joseph H. Pleck, "The Theory of Male Sex Role Identity: Its Rise and Fall, 1936 to the Present", in The Making of Masculinities, Harry Brod, ed., pp. 21-38.

just recently undergone investigation.<sup>36</sup> Questions about the connections of masculinity and militarism;<sup>37</sup> the relationship between codes of masculinity and Type A Cardiovascular Disease Personalities;<sup>38</sup> the determinants of heterosexuality and homosexuality activity and identity;<sup>39</sup> and the shaping of particular cultural concepts of male heroism by the rhythms of male life cycles, have surfaced.

Expanding areas in this field of study provide a much broader perspective on the questions of male sexuality and moral behavior than previous studies. A discussion of sexuality has moved from an instrumental understanding of having more satisfying sex, to a relational understanding of the meaning and implications of certain sexual functions and behaviors. Research has just begun to note the implications of the male's self identity with regard to biological functions and social interpretation constructs.<sup>40</sup> A broadening scope of understanding male sexuality has begun, not only in terms of its biological functions, but also in its relational contexts. The processes of male identity formation indicate a desire for more integrative work within male sexual identity and behaviors.

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<sup>36</sup>Brod, The Making of Masculinities, Chapter 2, p. 42, note 8.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Chapter 2, p. 42, notes 9, 10.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Chapter 2, p. 43, note 12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Chapter 2, p. 143, note 13.

<sup>40</sup>A. Rossi, "A Biosocial Perspective on Parenting", Daedalus, Spring 1977, pp. 1-31. M. McClinock, "Considering a Biosocial Perspective on Parenting", Signs, Summer 1979, pp. 703-710.



Grounding these implications of male sexuality and masculine ethics are the questions of what "is" and what "ought" to be.<sup>41</sup> What exactly is today's cultural experience of male identity? How is maleness being defined? Once "maleness" is defined, what ethical statements can be made about moral behavior? What, specifically, are the expectations and who determines them? How does what "ought" to be inform the cultural expression of being male? Should these "oughts" even exist?

What "is" and what "ought" to be are closely intertwined in the culture. The dialectic of the metaphysical "is" and the ethical "ought" in the American Christian Culture have been particularly problematic. Two seminal influences, I believe, in the understanding of this dialectic in the last half of the twentieth century are Lawrence Kohlberg and James Nelson.<sup>42</sup> It is to these two thinkers that I now direct this discussion.

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<sup>41</sup>The idea is my own but parallels Nelson's own thought in, The Intimate Connection, pp. 27-28.

<sup>42</sup>The preceding observations of the "is" and the "ought" will be discussed more thoroughly after in Chapter III, the contributions of Kohlberg and Nelson have been reviewed; and in Chapter IV, their contributions have been mutually critique with each other.

## CHAPTER III

### KOHLBERG'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY

#### Introduction

As an American professor of education and social psychology at Harvard University, Lawrence Kohlberg has carried on extensive research in male moral development. Kohlberg's research has focused less on individual behavior and more on the conscious motivation for behavior. The conscious reasons that motivate action are seen as indicators of levels or stages of moral maturity. Kohlberg's research views an individual's reasoning process in light of the circumstances peculiar to that individual and concludes that significant differences in moral outlook are apparent among individuals. Kohlberg assigns six developmental stages of moral reasoning divided over three distinct levels.

Before expounding on Kohlberg's moral development theory, it is necessary to underscore the importance of Kohlberg's research with regard to male sexuality. As a whole, Kohlberg's theory has generally been accepted as an aid for understanding male moral de-

velopment.<sup>43</sup> His research and theory has been influential in understanding the process of male moral decision-making. Kohlberg's theory of moral development has also been used as the basis of understanding faith development in the American Christian male experience.<sup>44</sup> Still further, since Kohlberg's theory and research has become public (1964), numerous articles, books, and further research has been used to test its reliability and validity. In the past 25 years, the most critical assessment of Kohlberg's theory has come from Carol Gilligan,<sup>45</sup> who argues that the Kohlberg model does not necessarily correlate with women's experience. Other than Gilligan, Kohlberg's theory for males has not been significantly challenged.<sup>46</sup>

Kohlberg's work is a good starting point to look at some assumptions about male sexuality and behavior. The following discussion applies Kohlberg's theory specifically to male sexual-moral development. Sexuality is included as one specific area within the

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<sup>43</sup>A majority of my understanding of Kohlberg is taken from Ronald Duska and Mariellen Whelan, Moral Development: A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg, (NY: Paulist Press, 1975).

<sup>44</sup>James Fowler, Stages of Faith, (Harper & Row Publishers, 1979); W.W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., Life and Faith, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987).

<sup>45</sup>Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>46</sup>For further research on Kohlberg's theory and inclusiveness, see James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues, (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1979). Also, Mary Brabeck, "Moral Judgement: Theory and Research in Differences between Males and Females," Developmental Review, Vol. III, Number 3, 1983, pp. 274-291.

whole range of moral issues of which Kohlberg's theory can be applied. The discussion proceeds by summarizing: a) general stage developmental theory; B) Kohlberg's research methods; c) Kohlberg's stages of moral development; and d) specific applicability to American Christian male identity and behavior.

### Stage Developmental Theory<sup>47</sup>

The work of stage developmental theorists, e.g. Piaget and Kohlberg, is based on the belief that change is a process of personal, cognitive reorganizations. This series of cognitive reorganizations (adjustments) are called stages. In turn, each stage has an identifiable shape, pattern and meaning. Stage development is not a process of imprinting rules or character, but a process involving transformation of cognitive structures. The theory is dependent on cognitive development and the stimulation of the social environment.

A general characteristic of the theory is that stage development is orderly and hierarchical. A second characteristic of stage developmental theory is that comprehension is limited to one stage beyond the individual's present stage. Each stage requires a cognitive orientation quite different than the previous stage.

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<sup>47</sup>Duska and Whelan, Moral Development, pp. 47-49; 100-103.

Individuals are cognitively attracted to reasoning one level above their predominant level for resolving problems and dilemmas in a more satisfactory way. Movement from one stage to another is effected when cognitive disequilibrium is created in an effort to discover new ways that adequately solve the dilemma. When a cognitive dissonance is provoked, it causes thinking about the inadequacies of one's present conscious structures and results in a search for a better and more satisfactory way of thinking.

### Kohlberg's Research Methods

Kohlberg, himself, never published a book in which he presented the essentials of his theory.<sup>48</sup> Most of what can be understood about his theory is found in the articles, "Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education". His written materials on research methods and results are highly technical. Nonetheless, his research can be summarized in an intelligible manner.

In the initial phase of his research, Kohlberg selected a group of fifty American males ranging in age from ten to twenty-eight and interviewed them every three years over a period of eighteen years. Through this research he hypothesized and distinguished six, general identifiable categories which became the

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<sup>48</sup>If Kohlberg published a book on his theory prior to his death in 1987, I am not familiar with this work. The Bibliography furnished gives a majority of his fundamental articles.

foundation for his six stages of moral development. Over the years, Kohlberg found that each of his subjects went through the same sequence of stages. In some cases, the rate of development differed. In some cases, not all subjects reached the highest stage of moral development. Through the years, Kohlberg has used the same system and techniques to interview subjects in countries other than America. In these interviews, Kohlberg's theories were also validated.

The interview itself involved the presentation of a specific hypothetical moral dilemma. Questions were asked to uncover the reasons behind the course of actions the subjects recommended for solving the dilemma. Hence, his research is directed toward moral reasoning more than moral behavior, as such.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to the development of the stories and questions, Kohlberg devised a scoring system which allowed researchers to organize varying answers according to categorized levels of moral development.<sup>50</sup> Analysis of the repeated pattern of responses made by the subject yielded a determination of the subject's level of moral development.

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<sup>49</sup>Kohlberg is not ordinarily recognized for his contribution to moral discussion. His main insight in moving from an "act centered morality" to an intention centered one was quite revolutionary for this time period. In my opinion, he was a leader in helping the discussion of morality move into the proper realm of intentionality.

<sup>50</sup>In Kohlberg's theory, it is important to underscore that no one particular answer is to be scored by itself. Rather, it is a composite score of answers that give direction to the categorization of personal moral development in a particular stage.

### Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Kohlberg identified six stages of moral development, two stages occurring at each of the three distinct levels. The first level is the pre-conventional level: 1) the punishment and obedience orientation, and 2) the instrumental relativist orientation. The second level is the conventional level containing: 3) the interpersonal concordance of "good boy - nice girl" orientation, and 4) the law and order orientation. The third level is the post-conventional level containing: 5) the social contract-legalistic orientation, and 6) the universal-ethical principle orientation. A review of Kohlberg's theory reveals that it can best be described as based on notions of a rational-linear causality; autonomous, independent action; and an abstract, universal, ethical orientation.

#### Level 1: Stages One and Two:

Kohlberg's levels are based on the ability to know and to think beyond one's immediate concrete circumstances. The pre-conventional level is the level wherein the person is, "responsible to the cultural rules and labels of good and bad."

At the pre-conventional level concrete reasoning focuses on an individual's experiences with little differentiation of self or

others.<sup>51</sup> It is egoistic. A person at this level does not reason beyond immediate personal consequences. A person learns that some actions bring pain while others bring pleasure. Authority is viewed as something that has always been there, bringing punishment and reward.

Stage One of the pre-conventional level is the punishment and obedience orientation.<sup>52</sup> According to Kohlberg, in Stage One, moral reasoning is based on the consequences of an action. At this stage, fear generates values. Fear also presents conveniently docile subjects from which one can easily extract "proper" behavior.

Stage Two, Kohlberg calls the instrumental-relativist orientation.<sup>53</sup> Reasoning is that which satisfies one's own needs in a physical or pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of, "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours"; not out of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

The cognitive gains in Stage Two moral reasoning are a more positive conception of what is good and a slightly differentiated view of society. But, Stage Two is still guided by an underlying egoism. The advance in the development is that the movement characterized negatively in Stage One as the avoidance of pain, is positively characterized at Stage Two as the seeking of gain. The

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<sup>51</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg and P. Turiel op. cit. p. 415.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



advancement is a rudimentary move towards socialization because one intuitively that, "If I work cooperatively with others, I will gain some pleasure or benefit." Yet, a stage two person has a primary cognitive disposition toward self interest.

## Level 2: Stages Three and Four:

Level 2 moral reasoning,<sup>54</sup> the conventional level, is a move from the concrete egoistic view of the pre-conventional level to a cognitive recognition of the value of a group, group practices, and rules. This reasoning moves from an evaluation of actions in terms of consequences, to an evaluation of action in terms of how well they fulfill the expectations of a group in their own right, regardless of the consequences to oneself.

The conventional level is a real valuing and feeling a part of the group because social rules and values are seen as reasonable attempts to live in harmony, not merely as capricious, arbitrary demands. This orientation requires commitment and self sacrifice to other individuals and the values of the group. At this level, abstract qualities like belonging, esteem and approval are more important than physical, concrete rewards. The ability to "role take" or "empathize" makes possible the limits and unsatisfactoriness of egoism.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

Kohlberg describes the cognitive disequilibrium of Stage Three as the interpersonal concordance of "good boy - nice girl" orientation.<sup>55</sup> Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. Stage Three centers on thinking that self-sacrifice is the basic determinant of good and bad. In Stage Three there is a switch from striving for physical pleasure to a striving for psychological pleasure that is available through social approval.

Stage Four develops when persons abstract a rationale for a set of rules for society as a whole, a moral law which governs all and justifies or condemns existing groups or institutions.

Stage Four calls for an orientation of law and order.<sup>56</sup> Kohlberg describes this stage as an, "orientation toward authority, fixed rules and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists in doing one's duty, showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake."<sup>57</sup>

A person at this level abstracts to himself as a generalized, undifferentiated member of society. He or she is preoccupied with maintaining and abiding by the law. To do one's duty is to maintain social order. This means that a Stage Four person may be able to sympathize with someone who breaks the law, but such sympathy will

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

be overridden by the concern to uphold social order. One's obligation to the law overrides one's loyalties to friends or groups. Such a person is a passionate devotee of the law because law is the ultimate guarantee of social order. Hence, Level 1 egoism is transformed at Level 2 by the abstraction of "the law". Where there was orientation toward the law, there is now an orientation toward what is behind the law.

Kohlberg posits a Stage Four B. This stage is distinct because it questions ordering principles that ask, "which law now?" and "what authority here?". Nevertheless, both Stages Four-A and Four-B have, as their overarching concern, a respect and obedience of the law. A movement to Level 3 requires a higher degree of cognitive disequilibrium and abstraction marked by skepticism, egoism, and relativism.

### Level 3: Stages Five and Six:

The movement to the final level of Kohlberg's theory is based in a post-conventional level. This post-conventional level is a principled way of thinking about the principles to which the society and the self ought to be committed. Such a movement is anticipated in Stage Four B in a concern for justifying particular laws or rules. The distinction of this final level, Stages Five and Six, is a concern for discovering the most basic principles from which all

laws are derived; not so much for justifying laws, rules, or authority.

At Stage Five a person questions whether the system or society has committed itself to the best possible system. The cognitive premise of this stage is that logical reasoning can furnish the ideals on which society is to strive. Such a state is autonomous because one can be freed from society's views.<sup>58</sup> Autonomy, for Kohlberg, means making up one's own mind about what is right and wrong. Kohlberg describes the principled level as being a

clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups.<sup>59</sup>

At such a principled level, the person thinks for and by himself, independently of others in authority. Hence, no group mind is to supplant one's own personal thinking.

In detailing Level 3, Kohlberg describes two different ways of getting at the principled level. Stage Five, according to Kohlberg, is "the social contract legalistic orientation."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Kohlberg's definition of autonomy is vague. As a result, it is not clear how much his definition of autonomy recognizes the human need for attachment. It seems to me that a clarification, on Kohlberg's part, of what he meant by autonomy might clarify some of the criticism of his theory. However, this is complicated because if he does recognize the necessity of relationship and attachment, movement into any kind of principled level three becomes ambiguous. The solution of the attachment and autonomy problem is particularly difficult to understand in Kohlberg's theory.

<sup>59</sup>Kohlberg and Turiel, pp. 415-416.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

The major difference between Stage Four and One-Half and Stage Five is the difference in the commitment to the "fixity" or "givenness" of law and the distrust of an authority which promulgates the law. Whereas in Stage Four, law is a given, in Stage Five, law is seen as an artifice created by a person or group of persons to frame what they saw was good. Hence, law and authority are mere conventions designed to meet society's needs.

A Stage Five person is able to challenge and critically examine the law. It is in this sense that he is free from the law and is able to give his own free, rational, willful assent. But, such critical examination of the law is not arbitrary. It is based on a critical, reasonable, appraisal of its rules and practices.

Stage Six is described by Kohlberg as the universal ethical principle orientation.<sup>61</sup> This, in Kohlberg's mind, is presumably the highest level of development in moral reasoning. But, Kohlberg is self admittingly "fuzzy" about how to describe this stage. Most often, he turns to examples of literature or history to describe this stage.<sup>62</sup>

In comparison with Stage Five, Kohlberg seems to suggest that Stage Six is based on "a decision of conscience in accord with self chosen ethical principles,"<sup>63</sup> rather than social utility. What

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. Kohlberg lists Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King as two of these examples.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

that means is somewhat unclear. One understanding is that it is based on a degree of universal appeal over time rather than mere contemporary appeal. This universal appeal must be much like that of Kant's categorical imperative in that principled moral reasoning does not consider the consequences of an action, but rather, an end by which all other human beings may act. Therefore, to do something as a means to an end is not principled moral reasoning. To treat another human being, however, as an end in themselves is an example of principled reasoning, or so it seems, in Kohlberg's thinking. This kind of thinking is not delineated in specific moral rules like the commandments, but in principles which are overarching metaphors of how and why to act. How specific these principles are to be is a question that remains unanswered by Kohlberg's theory.

### Critiques of Kohlberg's Stages

Kohlberg relates his empirical findings and stage development to Western traditions of moral philosophy and ethics. As noted earlier, Kohlberg claims that each empirical stage represents a cognitive advance over the previous one. This cognitive advance is to some degree a greater level of logical reasoning based on a higher level of abstraction. Therefore, each stage is "better" progressively, because it is more abstractly comprehensive and more rationally consistent than the previous stage. Furthermore, Kohlberg suggests that the moral reasoning moves toward an autonomy

of the moral agent. What is not clear is the nature of this autonomy; how autonomy sees responsibility toward others; how Stage One egoism can be empirically differentiated moral reasoning at Stage Six; and how circular causality can be accounted for in the theory. These are serious gaps of which the theory does not address.

Kohlberg's research claims that the stages of moral development are both descriptive and prescriptive (normative) of human behavior. This means, for purpose of this thesis, that such categories apply to what men are as well as what men "ought" to be. Therefore, a summary understanding of the work of Kohlberg's critics is necessary in order to ascertain the general application of his theory for men.

Over the years of Kohlberg's research, he and his associates have noted a curious pattern in the stage assignments given to women's responses to the moral dilemma stories. A larger number of women than men were assigned to Stage Three. Relative to men, few women were assigned to Stage Four. (Recall that Stage Four requires a greater degree of abstraction in taking the perspective of the larger society.) This cognitive abstraction specifically involved the working out of the conflict between rules and roles. The resolution was such that individuals who reasonably sorted out rules, roles, and relational requirements are favorably assigned to Stage Four.

As illustrated earlier in the discussion of Kohlberg's moral stages, Kohlberg describes moral maturity as the advancement in the ability to take the perspective of others, i.e., empathy, in order to be more capable of justly balancing another's claim over against one's own claims. This requires the ability to use principles that are essentially timeless and universal, trusting that these principles will yield outcomes in any situation. Kohlberg believes that moral maturity involves a kind of objectivity about particular situations involving time and circumstance as well a cognitive ability to approach issues of moral reasoning with the aid of logical, timeless, and universal principles.

Carol Gilligan, an associate of Kohlberg, began to investigate the reasons why so many women were categorized at Stage Three. She discovered that women perceived and interpreted moral situations in fundamentally different ways than men. When women face a moral dilemma they see the actors and the affected parties as woven in a web of relationships with one another.<sup>64</sup> This web of relationships anticipated a past history and an expected future. Gilligan saw this web of relationships entailing mutual responsibility and caring about being in relationship— a kind of logic peculiar to women.<sup>65</sup>

Hence, women see this web of relationships as continuous with their own experience and see a responsibility to look at the past,

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<sup>64</sup>Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice, p. 62.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.



present, and future of these relationships. Women show less ability to logically abstract from the situation and concrete circumstances required for categorization at Stage Four. In short, Gilligan discovered that women found themselves less capable of abstract detachment from situational values. She found that it was more difficult for women to overcome the biases of personal involvement than it was for men.<sup>66</sup>

Gilligan denotes Kohlberg's understanding of ethics as fundamentally an ethic of justice and rights. She asserts that it is particularly characteristic of males. This justice and rights orientation is the expression of an autonomous, independent, individuated self whose moral judgments follow principles that define rights and duties without due consideration of specific circumstances and costs.<sup>67</sup>

Gilligan also contended that the way women approach ethical decision making is no less logical, developed, or sophisticated than that of men.<sup>68</sup> It is however, primarily an ethic of responsibility and care.<sup>69</sup> This moral reasoning corresponds to the experience of the self as part of relationships, as a "connected self". In this approach, moral judgments consider specific details of concrete situations. Decisions are guided by an interest in minimizing the

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-171.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

overall harm and maximizing the overall good in the whole of these relationships.

Gilligan's research has criticized Kohlberg's theory of moral development for having neglected the contribution of a different approach to morality, particularly that of an ethic of responsibility and care. Moreover, from Gilligan's point of view, Kohlberg's theory suggests that the ethic of justice and rights is the only valid moral orientation. Kohlberg's theory supplants one kind of ethics for another, if you will, a typically masculine ethic over a typically feminine ethic.

### Kohlberg and Male Sexual Identity

Gilligan makes some hypothesis as to why her "ethic of responsibility and care" more typically characterizes women in our society than it does men and why an ethic of justice and rights more typically characterizes men in our society than it does women. The rationale has to do with the early childhood relations between the primary caregivers (typically mother) and their sons, and between the primary caretakers (typically mother) and their daughters. Here she relies on the independent works of Nancy Chodorow and Robert Stoller who have made helpful contributions in the area of the formation of gender identity.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structures and Feminine Personality," in Women, Culture, and Society, eds. M.Z. Rozaldo and L. Lamher.

Chodorow and Stoller observe that female identity formation occurs in the context of ongoing relationships with mother. Mothers experience their daughters as like themselves, encouraging girls to be like mother. The notions of attachment and relationship are, therefore, continuous for females.

Males, on the other hand, tend to be experienced by their mothers as more opposite and different than mother. Mothers, therefore, treat their sons differently from the start, giving them strong cues for gender identity based on a distinct separation and a specific dis-identification with their mothers. Sons must curtail, in some way, the empathic ties with their mothers. Two primary ways are: a) physical distancing from females, and b) a defensive firming of ego boundaries. Chodorow and Stoller posit that this dis-identification and separation is for males much more traumatic than what earlier research had suggested.

For the purposes of this thesis, Gilligan, Chodorow, and Stoller agree that male sexual identity and behavior is prone to externalization and a development of rigid ego boundaries. These qualities contribute to the ability to abstract and think philosophically. Creating strong ego boundaries also enable males to assume

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(Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 1974); Chodorow, The Pre-production of Mothering, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978); and Robert Stoller, "A Contribution to the Study of Gender Identity," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 45 (1964:220-226).

more distance from their mothers in order to join with their fathers in the work-a-day world of tasks.

Yet, while externalization and ego boundaries are essential elements for the male psyche, the distance created is not without a cost. Males emerge with less capacity for empathy and closeness than do females precisely because their identity is discontinuous with their mothers. As a result, males continue to have a weaker and a more disrupted basis for experiencing the needs and feelings of others. Males also tend to have more difficulty empathically identifying with others than do females.

Because of the painful discontinuity with their mothers, male empathy and intimacy are experienced as a threat to losing what the male has worked so hard to achieve in the formation of his identity. Hence, the learned dynamics of disconnectedness and separation are ingrained into the experience of what it means to be male. Typically, this separation and discontinuity is translated into a male's play as a driving need for achievement and competition.<sup>71</sup> These drives become, in effect, the solidification of an identity that is distant, abstract, individuated and autonomous. It is this process that has become typical of what is engendered in the American Christian male experience.

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<sup>71</sup>See Janet Lever, "Sex Differences in the Games Children Play," Social Problems, 23 (1976):478-487; and "Sex Differences in the Complexity of Children's Play and Games," American Sociological Review, 43 (1978):471-483.

In summary, male moral maturity entails learning how to balance the rights of persons, including one's own rights, with the claims of the welfare of persons and groups for whom one feels responsible. It means developing a detached capacity for employing rules and principles to determine just outcomes, when no action can be taken where someone will not be harmed.

Chodorow and Stoller suggest that for males a complimentary trajectory toward an ethic of responsibility and care entails learning to think more relatedly in overcoming excessive detachment and categorization, and learning to see persons in relationships of shared histories and mutual responsibilities. Such a trajectory would strengthen men's abilities to take effective care of growing communities and webs of intimate relationship needs.<sup>72</sup>

The question becomes, "Is Kohlberg's theory adequate for male-sexual-moral development?" What seems clear from Kohlberg's stages of moral development and the critique of Gilligan, is that Kohlberg's stages are based on a particular way of seeing the mature person. Since the scope of this thesis is restricted to male sexual identity, and because Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg can be granted without harm to Kohlberg's presentation of masculine moral development, it is safe to say that Kohlberg's theory is based on a certain

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<sup>72</sup>These are the conclusions of Chodorow and Stoller's work from which Gilligan builds.

understanding of male identity and that it alone is insufficient when seeking to define male sexual identity.

The masculine identity Kohlberg suggests is one which moves from the formation of strong empathic qualities to an individual who can abstract logically and systematically. In this abstraction some universal principles are exonerated while others are not. In this reading of Kohlberg, his understanding of moral maturity exonerates the qualities of thinking, abstraction, analytical criticism, cool level-headedness, individualism, the holding to objective performance standards, activity and achievement, externality and instrumentality, linear causality, distance, competition and hardness.<sup>73</sup> In as much as these qualities are supportive of a masculine sexual identity, Kohlberg's theory of moral development is logical and adequate. In as much as there are other complimentary masculine qualities that also prescribe a masculine sexual identity, Kohlberg's theory of moral development is to some degree tentative and suspect.

To further explicate a response to the question of the adequacy of Kohlberg's theory of moral development for the male sexual experience, it is necessary to obtain another viewpoint from which to compare Kohlberg. To this end, the work of James Nelson and his understanding of the male sexual experience is helpful.

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<sup>73</sup>Opposite qualities in this regard respectively are: feeling, concreteness, acceptance of diversity, emotional, mutual, vulnerability, bonding and presence, internality and groundedness, relationality, cyclical causality, closeness, atuneness to rhythms, collaboration, softness, horizontalness and transitoriness.

## CHAPTER IV

### NELSON'S CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY

#### Introduction

In his book, The Intimate Connection,<sup>74</sup> James Nelson presents and critiques the contemporary psycho-sexual understanding of male sexuality in the American Christian Culture. He suggests that the present understanding of male sexuality is narrowly focused. Spurred by the feminist critique and the deep yearning of males for an integrated and wholistic masculine self identity, Nelson postulates that healing will be brought about through a rethinking and reworking of the historically otherwise dichotomous experiences of sexuality and spirituality.

Nelson believes that there is an intimate connection between being able to love sexually and to grow spiritually. His central question is, "If sexuality is the physiological and psychological grounding of our capacities to love, if our destiny after the image

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<sup>74</sup>Nelson's book, The Intimate Connection is based on his two earlier books on spirituality and human sexuality, Between Two Gardens and Embodiment. All three books contain the same epistemological underpinnings, that of a spirituality that is wedded to an awareness of the body.

of the Cosmic Lover is to be lovers in the richest, fullest, sense of that good word, then how do our sexual ethics figure into our spiritual destiny?"<sup>75</sup>

The work of James Nelson has been chosen to elucidate the topic of male sexuality for a number of reasons. Professionally, as a theologian and an educator, Nelson is one of very few who has studied the phenomena of sexuality from an American Christian perspective. His earlier published works of Between Two Gardens and Embodiment contain ground-breaking research and attitudes about the topic of sexuality from this viewpoint.<sup>76</sup>

As a writer and lecturer, Nelson is well respected for his assessment of the contemporary cultural understanding (or lack thereof) of the mutual influence between sexual mores in society and the spiritual tradition.<sup>77</sup> While grounded in a Protestant tradition, he is also active in an ecumenical dialogue on sexuality with the Catholic and Jewish traditions.

The Intimate Connection is one of the few resources that have attempted to broach the subject of masculine identity from a sexual-spiritual perspective. Hence, Nelson is chosen as the best

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<sup>75</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 125.

<sup>76</sup>Nelson has a broad definition of spirituality. This broad definition is necessitated because the Christian tradition's tendency is to separate spirituality from the rest of life creating a rampant dualism that undermines the synthesis of mind and body; spirit and matter.

<sup>77</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, pp. 26-28.



resource to critique and dialogue with Kohlberg. It is curious to note that a Catholic perspective on the subject has, as yet, to be attempted.<sup>78</sup>

Nelson has also been chosen because he is White, American, and Christian.<sup>79</sup> This thesis assumes that these labels carry with them certain privileged statuses in the culture as well as certain unconscious biases. This thesis also assumes that a wholistic, synthesized, relational approach to life makes the most sense. Thus, Nelson's viewpoint is not only instrumental, but necessary.

The work of James Nelson in, The Intimate Connection, is summarized as follows: 1) Epistemological Underpinnings; 2) The Contemporary Dilemma of Male Sexuality; and, 3) Toward New Ways of

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<sup>78</sup>This is a curious point that the Catholic Church has not attempted such a synthesis. Much speculation could be made about why this is so. Nonetheless, I will leave that speculation to the reader.

<sup>79</sup>As a White, American, Christian I feel I know something of Nelson's experience and value convictions. I accept the feminist critique. I experience problems with intimacy and a distancing from my own bodily experience. I recognize I have been the benefactor of a distorted expression of male masculinity in this country and yet, can painfully feel its effects. Furthermore, feeling this pain, I wish to ease that pain, as well as the pain of those like me. Nelson says it best when he writes: "It is about knowing and embracing our male sexual stories in their joys and in their pains, in their creativity and in their destructiveness. It is an attempt to be honest about our ambiguities as men, that we might celebrate things wherein we have been life giving and open ourselves to the gracious energies of healing where we have been life denying" (p. 25).

At the same time, I acknowledge that because I can identify with Nelson, I may not be able to perceive the biases and blind spots of his argument. Nonetheless, in my desire to understand my own male sexual identity and in pursuit of understanding Nelson's public presentation of his personal odyssey, I recognize, with Nelson, similar value assumptions and assessments.

Masculine Identity. The novelty of Nelson's thinking and some questions regarding his reading of the male-sexual spiritual experience is also highlighted.

### Nelson's Epistemological Underpinnings

First, Nelson believes that the contemporary understanding of the world is often dichotomous. It is dichotomous in that bodies of knowledge (such as theology and psychology) have often been treated as independent sources of information, with no attempt to synthesize the two.<sup>80</sup> Regarding male sexuality, Nelson opts to integrate seriously the "truths" of both scientific and religious thinking. Therefore, any study of male sexuality needs to consider masculine spirituality.

Specifically for Nelson, the study of contemporary male sexuality connects body-psychology with incarnation theology. By body-psychology, Nelson means the observation and awareness of certain determined biological structures and functions.<sup>81</sup> By incarnational theology, Nelson means the patterning of life around one's

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<sup>80</sup>Some simple examples Nelson describes are the double messages people receive such as, "Sex is God given and beautiful, but don't talk about it, especially in church" and "Sex is dirty, save it for someone you love", p. 29.

<sup>81</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 27.

thinking, feeling, experiencing, and nurturing experiences of God in our enfleshed faith community.<sup>82</sup>

As a combined approach, Nelson names this as body theology, an approach which takes seriously that when human beings reflect, they do so as embodied selves.<sup>83</sup> This approach is one which is inductive rather than deductive. It moves from the concrete and particular toward the more inclusive and general. It begins with the bodily experiences of life rather than with universal doctrinal formulations and Olympian generalizations.

A second epistemological underpinning of Nelson's thought is feminist studies. Nelson takes the feminist critique very seriously.<sup>84</sup> Because traditional scholarship has made men into pseudo-universal generic human beings, whatever is specific to men as men has been excluded from consideration. The attempt to understand experiences of masculinity as specific male phenomena, Nelson believes, is beneficial for men as well as women.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, pp. 14-18 (also, Nelson's, Embodiment). In addition, see Marc E. Mishkind, et al., The Embodiment of Masculinity, in Changing Men, Michael Kimmel ed. (Newberry Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1987) pp. 37-49.

<sup>84</sup>This critique is that traditional male scholarship has written out women and has inadequately reflected women's experiences. Nelson believes scholarship that assumes the stance of "generic man" not only misses an appreciation of women's experience, but also knowledge of men's experience, insofar as it is specifically men's. Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 18.

A third epistemological underpinning is the way Nelson understands human sexuality and human spirituality. By sexuality, Nelson means a way of being in the world as gendered persons, having male or female biological structures, and socially, internalized self understandings of those meanings.<sup>85</sup> Sexuality is more than biological structures, genital activity, and affectional predeterminations. Sexuality may include all of the above, but broadly based, sexuality is the desire for intimacy and communion, both emotionally and physically.<sup>86</sup> In short, "sexuality is the physiological and psychological grounding of our capacity to love."<sup>87</sup> Sexuality has not always been understood in this way.

For Nelson spirituality refers to the ways and patterns by which the person intellectually, emotionally, and physically relates to that which is ultimately real and worthwhile for him or her.<sup>88</sup> Spirituality, therefore, implies use and awareness of one's body to discover one's sense of meaning and belonging, rather than an attempt to transcend earthly matter. Holiness is the acceptance and celebration of one's own bodiliness. Like sexuality, spirituality has not always been understood in this way.

One final epistemological assumption of Nelson is his belief that connection rather than separation is the fundamental reality of

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

life.<sup>89</sup> By connection, Nelson means the mutual influence and involvement of all realities in a particular experience. Connection or relatedness does not mean uniformity. Rather, it opens the possibility for diversity and uniqueness. By asserting that all of life's processes are connected and interrelated, Nelson reaffirms a tolerance for a great multiplicity of values and character determinants. This also affirms that personal fulfillment and mutuality are not inherent contradictions.<sup>90</sup>

### The Contemporary Dilemma of Male Sexual Identity

Nelson suggests three issues underlying men's problematic sexual attitudes and behaviors. He probes the connections the issues have with men's spirituality. The three issues are sexism, genitalization, and separation.<sup>91</sup>

Sexism is the hierarchical attitude that one sex is privileged to assert itself over the other sex. Male sexism dynamics are those of dualism and patriarchy. Dualism is the attitude and behavior that splits the human experience into distinct and opposing realities. Male experience is identified with transcendence, while female experience is identified with immanence, nature, and the

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<sup>89</sup>See Beverly Wildung Harrison's, Making the Connections, Chapter 1, pp. 34-41.

<sup>90</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 39.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

body. Dualism reinforces the particular responsibility and destiny of males to rule and control nature, body, and woman. Patriarchy is a form of dualism which emphasizes that a man's world is one of strain and strength privilege. It is the world of the elite, where men possess the more highly valued cultural activities of special ritual and leisure functions, and where his world transcends the world of daily necessity.

Nelson believes that sexism is born out of fear: fear that women are much more involved in the birthing process than men and thus, breeding envy and resentment.<sup>92</sup> This resentment, coupled with the attitude that a man's worth is measured by what he can do, exacerbates the pervasiveness and entrenchment of sexism.

A second attitude and behavior of contemporary male sexuality is genitalization. Genitalization identifies sexuality with a sexual event involving the male's genitals. Genitalization is the exclusive focus on an act involving genital expression rather than on a focus of loving intimacy, sensuous playfulness, or life giving expression.<sup>93</sup> It regards sexual experience as the performance of actions involving excitement, erection, sometimes penetration and orgasm.

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 33. The counterpart to Freud's theory of women's penis envy is men's womb envy suggested by Feder Kittay in, "Womb Envy: An Explanatory Concept," in Mothering Essays in Feminist Theory, Joyce Trebilcock, ed. (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984).

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, pp. 34-38.

In genitalization, the male encounters his penis as an instrument of penetration to explore a mystery that is beyond himself. In short, because his sex organ is external, he tends to externalize his relationships with other persons and objects. Besides encouraging externalization, male genitalization seems to prize the qualities of hardness, up-ness and linearity. These qualities stress rugged individualism. It is these qualities which incline men toward certain perceptions and emphases of their distinct and separate roles in society.

The third and final attitude and behavior in male sexual experience is separation. Nelson understands this as the male's tendency to separate individuation from attachment and sex from intimacy. For this reason, though individuality comes much more easily for males, gender identity comes less easily and more painfully.

Because boys discover they are anatomically different from mother (for the most part the primary caretaker), men separate emotional feelings and erotic feelings.<sup>94</sup> While emotional feelings and connections get pressed down, erotic feelings take on a more specifically sexual context. Though these sexual feelings are still directed toward the mother, the incest taboo makes it clear that any genital expression must take place with a woman other than his mother.

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-42.

As this dynamic persists through puberty and adulthood, men more quickly respond to the sexual aspects of a relationship. As a consequence, if a man feels intense emotions, intercourse seems to be the appropriate action. Though these biological observations are more tendencies than determination, Nelson clarifies that they help to explain why men can more easily separate sex from emotional attachment than women.

Another factor regarding separation, Nelson suggests, is the father's physical and emotional distance from his child. Instead of finding a father with whom he can identify, the male differentiates the masculine through a negative evaluation of the feminine. Nelson states:

Masculinity is defined by what it is not. What it is is much more difficult to comprehend. In searching for a father, the predominantly heterosexual male comes to understand that physical and emotional closeness comes through relationship with a woman who is needed to be the vicarious emotional expresser and interpreter of his own feelings to himself.<sup>95</sup>

When he turns for intimacy to the woman, the male's feelings of dependency and vulnerability are activated and this produces a situation of great ambivalence for him. Hence there is a deep tension between intimacy and masculinity. The male wants both, and each seems to be purchased at the expense of the other. He finds his desire for sexual expressiveness and his desire for autonomous individuation as contradictory and separate.

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 42.



### Toward New Ways of Viewing Male Sexual Identity

Nelson suggests that a richer, more fulfilling, more just and peaceful masculine sexuality will depend in no small measure upon new ways of learning to be sexual. He proposes to explore that which is distinctive of the male body experience. Men need to balance the desire to penetrate and explore the mystery of otherness while developing a more receptive and vulnerable masculine sexual-spiritual identity. Nelson's approach to achieving this is a re-interpretation of man's bodily experiences.<sup>96</sup>

Nelson states that the present cultural understanding of male sexuality is an over-phallic interpretation, emphasizing the linear, the vertical, and the hard. These are the meanings of erection, which the male unconsciously encounters. The "linear" is the desire for achievement, a cause-effect relationship, a need to make one's mark, the result of orgasmic achievement. The "vertical" is the push to penetrate and explore something that is outside of himself, the quest to go higher and stretch farther. It is an anticipation between what is known and not known; what is possessed and not possessed; what is already, but not yet. It is the satisfaction of straining to go further intellectually, physically and socially.

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<sup>96</sup>Nelson does not argue for a biological determinism but rather, he suggests biological tendencies and inclinations in life experience. Nelson attempts to give due attention to the dimensions of sexuality given by biology and those meanings males are taught as appropriate for their gender (p. 27).

The hard is that quality which marks determined effort and drive, putting the man in touch with the excitement and solidness of strenuous achievement. It is strength, vitality, and life giving energy. In this sense, Nelson affirms phallos as the sacred image of the masculine [c.f. Eugene Monick] in as much as it is a partial expression of masculine sexual identity.<sup>97</sup>

But the contemporary focus on phallos leaves the understanding of male identity with a painful priapism [an erection that will not subside]. What has been ignored in the observation of male genital awareness is that for the most part, men are genitally soft. This state, which Nelson names the penis state, is man's general awareness inasmuch as men are aware of this state at all. The penis interpretation of man's sexual experience observes that men, genitally, are smaller, softer, vulnerable, and somewhat more comical.<sup>98</sup>

What this implies is that penis is a state in which male sexual identity is vulnerable, soft, and receptive. Vulnerable penile energy is one of relaxed humility, the letting go of all urgency, trusting that to be, not to do, is enough. Soft implies a state in which one is willing to undergo an effect rather than to make an

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-94. Eugene Monick, Phallos: Sacred Image of the Masculine, (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1987).

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 94-96. "Penis rather than Phallus is our awareness, insofar as we are aware at all." This suggestion of penile awareness is, in my opinion, Nelson's most significant contribution, having in its mention, far reaching implications.

effect. This state is open to the mystery of darkness and not knowing. It is receptive to being known by another with the recognition of ordinary awareness.

Nelson suggests that such recognition of penile energy combined with phallic energy more closely enables the male to understand his full sexual-spiritual experience. The revelation of male genital experience is one that values not only potency, ecstasy, affirmation and thanksgiving but also flaccidity, emptiness, neediness, and nothingness.<sup>99</sup> Hence, "male sexual experience is a duality in which explosive phallic achievement can become in an instant the soft, vulnerable state of the penis."<sup>100</sup>

To over-emphasize either phallic or penile energy is to distort the meaning of male sexual-spiritual power. Consequently, the central issue of male sexuality/spirituality ought not always be one of power and control based on unilateral power: a limited, closed energy system, but one of influential awareness based on relational power: an energy system that can both produce and undergo an effect. Hence, the true size and power of a sexual man is the capac-

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 95. Nelson notes that these two genital states contain an affirmation of both Western Christian Spiritual traditions of the Via Positiva and Via Negativa. See Matthew Fox, Western Spirituality: Historical Roots Ecumenical Routes, (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Clareton, 1979).

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

ity to become large enough to make room for another within the self, without losing the self's own integrity and freedom.<sup>101</sup>

Nelson suggests seven shifts in bringing the full expression of male sexuality and spirituality to consciousness.<sup>102</sup> The first shift is in facilitating men's awareness and acceptance of the "gospel" in their bodies. This means continued movement toward appreciating the need for penile energy. This liberation is the re-discovery of the male's capacity for certain relational qualities— hunger for friends, living without the constant performance demand, intimacy with lovers, knowing one's own feelings, knowing one's own children, the ability to play without having to win, the possibility of living without premature death, release from the compulsion to inflict violence upon the planet, and simply feeling good about being a man. Such a shift requires the ability to talk about such subjects with other men.

A second shift is understanding sexuality as intrinsic to the human experience rather than as incidental or detrimental to human experience. Such a shift requires recognition of emotion and bodily eros. Becoming more sensate and expressing feelings are the prerequisite experiences for connection and intimacy. In this respect,

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-105. Also, Nelson is largely indebted to Bernard Loomer for these insights in "Two Kinds of Power," Criterion, Vol. 15, No. 1, Winter 1976, and "S-I-Z-E", Criterion, Vol. 13, No. 3, Spring 1974.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-131. New ways in our sexual spirituality. I have limited my discussion here particularly to the discussion of male sexuality.

male sexuality is not something that should drive men toward isolation and loneliness, but should draw them into communion and community.

A third shift suggested by Nelson is the recognition of male sexuality as an entire orientation by which men approach life, not just an orientation toward specific acts. To recognize that sexuality means more than penetration and orgasm is to recognize that male sexuality is an orientation which expresses the intention of giving life or destroying life. To recognize that sexuality is an intrinsic part of male character and personality, allows sexuality to be removed from a realm of taboo to a reality that can be openly discussed. Asexual relationships are more detrimental than honest awareness for one's growing, maturing sexuality.

A parallel shift is the awareness that men come to be whole persons through their unique sexuality rather than through denying their sexual identity. In theological terms it is coming to understand that the body (sexuality), can be salvific. This sexual salvation means that sexual wholeness is a growth process necessitating body self acceptance, the capacity for sensuousness, the capacity for play, and the diffusion of the erotic throughout the whole body (rather than in its genitalization). Each movement in accepting one's bodiness is a step toward the recovery of lost dimensions of one's sexuality.

Another shift, is the movement from an act-centered sexual ethics to a relational-centered sexual ethics. Such a shift recognizes the flesh and blood concreteness of human interactions rather than the bloodless abstractions, principles and concepts that begin to take on a life of their own. Wholesome sexuality is that which fosters a creative growth toward personal integration with others. Destructive sexuality results in personal frustration and interpersonal alienation. Relational sexual ethics are promoted by self liberating, other enriching, honest, faithful, socially responsible, life serving and joyous sexual expressions. In short, to know oneself as an embodied person is to know oneself as profoundly relational.

A sixth shift is the understanding of the local community as sexual rather than asexual. Through the appreciation of sexual communities, human beings can be drawn into intercourse: verbal, tactile, social, political, and economic. As embodied persons men need to know the occasions and meanings of these human encounters because they test two important questions of size and power.<sup>103</sup> These encounters as embodied expressions of sexuality are profoundly identity-forming because they ask: "Am I large enough to incorporate this other person as a subject and an object of ultimate concern?"

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<sup>103</sup>Loomer, "S-I-Z-E", p. 21.

A final shift in a full expression of male sexuality is the shift from understanding male sexuality as a private issue to understanding it as a public issue. Such universal sexual consciousness is the freeing of right brain capacities to imagine, to dream, to relate, and to be interdependent. It is to know the universe as a mutually participatory one, neither dominant and submissive, nor active and passive. It is the experience of integration. It is in the experience of knowing one's masculinity as a totality of the universe that men experience partially, rather than a part of the universe man experiences totally. Through the recognition of their limits, men come to find the intimate connections for which they so long.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, p. 131. And, Teilhard de Chardin, Science and Christ, (NY: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 12-13.

## CHAPTER V

### AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH FOR MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY

#### Introduction

Having looked at the theory of male moral development according to Lawrence Kohlberg and the psycho-theological understanding of male sexuality by James Nelson, what can be said about male sexual identity and the development of male sexual behavior?<sup>105</sup> What is Nelson's possible critique of Kohlberg's view of male sexual identity? How could Kohlberg possibly respond to Nelson's critique of the general theory of moral development he proposes? Such a discussion seems to be the final step in trying to establish what it might mean to be male, sexually and morally.

#### Nelson's Critique of Kohlberg

Kohlberg produced what appears to be a helpful schema for understanding masculine moral development. This is seen in the description of developmental stages as integrated structures of moral

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<sup>105</sup>This dialogue is an imaginative one. I attempt to represent both Nelson and Kohlberg in their own perspectives. While polarization of either one's position is possible, I hope to have remained faithful to their core thought.



logic. What is unclear, however, is what Kohlberg's theory of "moral development" is meant to do. As a descriptive theory, Kohlberg attempts to describe how moral development occurs. As a prescriptive theory, he attempts to describe how moral development should occur. If Kohlberg is trying to do both, which he claims he is, he makes an assumption that does not necessarily follow. The assumption is best summarized as, "If you can learn how development occurs in all people, you will be better able to suggest how it ought to occur in healthy persons."

However, descriptive stages do not indicate what ought to be the case because these stages do not account for the variability of how people arrive at a specific moral decision-making stage. A more critical examination of Kohlberg's theory suggests that he makes some assumptions about how males create themselves through choices and moral commitments. What he lacks is a theory of moral character involving personal history and concrete circumstances.<sup>106</sup> Instead, Kohlberg proposes a theory of moral development that is linear, rational, hierarchical, and autonomous. Such a view of moral development is an overly phallic view of reality, and thus describes only one part of a man's experience: masculine morality.

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<sup>106</sup>I adapt an argument toward Kohlberg, similar to that of Stanley Hauerwas' work in, A Community of Character, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 129-152, and of Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice.

Kohlberg's descriptions of moral reasoning are observations about a way of making meaning of morality with a particular and limited understanding of male identity. This way of looking at morality is defined as an ethic of justice and rights. Such an ethic of justice and rights bases itself in the principles Kohlberg expounds, namely that of externality, abstraction, and autonomy.<sup>107</sup>

Such a conception of morality ignores the observations of a different type of ethical position, namely an ethic of responsibility and care. The ethic of responsibility and care values the realities of internality, concreteness, and connectedness. Kohlberg's claim that his understanding of morality provides substantive and material implications for actual moral behavior is suspect. It remains to be shown that purely "formal" principles of justice and rights can generate the kind of commitment of universality that Kohlberg desires.

Moreover, Kohlberg's theory is not as free from history as it claims to be. Rather, Kohlberg's theory is based on a certain way of looking at morality from a phallic male viewpoint. It is based on a one-sided view of reality that does not fully appreciate the contribution of a concrete and relational way of ethics; an understanding of penile energy.

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<sup>107</sup>For a critique on the concept of autonomy, see Gerald Dworkin, "Moral Autonomy", in Morals, Science and Sociality, Englehart and Callahan, eds., (Hastings on Hudson, NY: Hastings Center, 1978), pp. 156-170.

Kohlberg's theory supports only a segment of society that is secure in being a society of strangers and one that shares no goods in common.<sup>108</sup> Kohlberg's commitment to linearity, abstraction, and logic delimit the place of an ethic of responsibility and care. To argue that Kohlberg's conception of morality is based on universal value-free assumptions is untenable. The value-free, universal conception of human moral development he has proposed is in fact a reaffirmation of a traditional, limited, male-dominant view of morality.

It is quite clear that Kohlberg's theory is based on levels of cognitive abstraction as a human person develops. There is much to be said in this regard. The contention is that moral growth occurs through a cognitive dissonance occasioned by role conflicts. Internal, logical exercises that help one to anticipate and rehearse such conflicts are necessarily helpful in achieving moral maturity. However, such development is not simply a process of logical deduction in order to justify one's decisions from a universal perspective.

The process of experiential deduction does include some degree of values and logical principles, but it is also equally a process of the interaction of these values and principles within a complexity of relationships as seen in the formation of personal character and a sense of attachment. Development of the person is more than the sum of principles to which one adheres. Development is based as

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<sup>108</sup>Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p. 133, note 15.

much on intimacy, relationship, and interdependence as it is on individuation, independence, and autonomy. Instead, Kohlberg only emphasizes one side of the human experience, that of independence, autonomy, and cognitive achievement.

It is in Kohlberg's use of the metaphor of stages that his thought is to be seen as linear and inconsistent. Kohlberg's use of the "stages" is never self analyzed or defended as an adequate metaphor to describe the process of moral development. The use of this term implies a linear way of thinking rather than a notion of interrelated or cyclical causality. The inadequacy of Kohlberg's use of the stage metaphor is particularly evident in his further developments around Stage Four B, representing the cognitive process of arriving at Stage Four B as a kind of "re-working" of Stages Two and Three.

It is particularly around the leap of Stage Four and Stage Five that Kohlberg is confronted with the inadequacy of his use of the "stage" metaphor. It is an anomaly. In spite of Kohlberg's rather conscious commitment to Kant's categories, he makes the categorical mistake of describing autonomy as proceeding by "stages".<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, Theodore Green, trans., (NY: Harper Torch Books, 1960). For more on Kant and Kohlberg, himself, "From Is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with it in the Study of Moral Development", in Cognitive Development and Epistemology, T. Mischel, ed., (NY: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 215-218.

Kant, in fact, made it clear that autonomy (virtue) was free from all natural causes of linear thinking (reason).

Another criticism of Kohlberg's theory rests in its cognitive conceptions of morality. Kohlberg's "ethics of autonomy" is an attempt to secure the objectivity of rational thought by basing morality in a rationality abstracted from primary relationships.<sup>110</sup> Such a view of autonomous rationality assumes that if one is able to think more consistently about what is the good, then one will do it. This is not necessarily the case. Nor is it the case that the object of morality focuses on, "what should I do" rather than, "what should I be".

Kohlberg's ethics of autonomy is in fact an ethic of justice and rights that despairs of the possibility of moral growth. This ethical position is one of despair because it assumes that what makes us moral is the measuring up to objective criteria. An objective criteria is one that assumes that personal circumstances are not required to conceive of the universal principle at stake. Instead, one is captive of an overarching principle to which one must conform one's cognitive processes.

An ethical position of hope would hold that moral choices are embodied with concreteness and situationality because these choices are never predetermined by past experiences. What is required is

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<sup>110</sup>Hauerwas, A Community of Character, p.271, note 14.

that one know the truer account of the relation of the past to the present situation of relationships with which one attempts to care.<sup>111</sup> This kind of ethic is an ethic of responsibility and care.

What is clear, then, is that Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development are not objectively value-free conceptions of male sexual identity. His theory is based on rational, linear, abstractions, which in themselves are value judgements. He chooses the abstract, rational values over concrete, relational values. Kohlberg neglects concrete situationality and the influence of interpersonal relationships in his theory of stage development.

Furthermore, Kohlberg chooses an ethic of justice and rights to give support to his theory while he neglects an ethic of responsibility and care about relationships. Understanding that it is much easier to deal with individuals as opposed to the complex interactions of relationships, and to deal with objective notions of justice and duty as opposed to messy considerations of what it means to authentically care about oneself and others, it is clear why Kohlberg has chosen the course that he has. Rather than deal with the subjective understandings of love and intimacy, he has chosen to deal with a developmental morality that can be objectively measured and categorized. In doing so he has supplanted one perspective of traditional ethics for another.

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p.271, note 14.

In fact, Kohlberg's ethic of justice and rights over an ethic of responsibility and care undermines the universality of his moral stages. His conception of moral stages does not take into account an ethic that values concrete relationships and influential affects. Hence, according to Nelson's conceptions, an ethic of justice and rights is based in a phallic view of reality. An ethic of responsibility and care is based in a penile view of reality. Both visions of reality are needed to fully understand male sexual identity and male sexual morality. To ignore the latter vision of reality is to ignore its validity.

To emphasize one schema over another is to describe a limited view of masculine moral development. To do this is to stereotype typical ways of behaving that denigrate the potential of becoming a whole man, one who is strong enough to make an effect and to undergo an effect simultaneously. To know this potential is to know the favorable ratio with which male identity can be formed by the external processes of phallic energy as well as the internal processes of penile energy. Both are necessary in the development of a whole man of character and virtue and acting morally in the world.

#### Kohlberg's Critique of Nelson

Nelson offers an alternative view of male sexual identity. This view sees males as possessing two kinds of energy which create

and sustain a pattern of intimacy and generativity. In the present culture, Nelson believes that there has been an over-emphasis of one kind of energy (phallic) to the detriment of male's complimentary energy (penile). As a result, Nelson proposes that more opportunities must be presented in the culture that allow men to experience their soft, vulnerable and relational sides as an integral part of their unique identity as males.

In as much as Kohlberg presents a skewed perspective on the part of men toward their sexuality, Nelson presents a perspective that attempts to counterbalance a developmental model that is based on a linear, hierarchical, step-wise progression of stages. The question exists, then, how does Nelson propose to counterbalance this culturally skewed perspective of male sexuality without polarization? How does Nelson propose to reverse the trend of a technical, aggressive, achievement-oriented society utilizing the energy of that system in a transforming way? Is Nelson's perspective of "body-awareness" enough to reverse males' dichotomous patterns of thinking? Furthermore, because these attitudes seem somewhat entrenched in the self identity of most males, what new behaviors must liberated males begin that concretizes a re-experience of a deeply energetic and flexible male sexuality? What are the limits of a male ethic of care and responsibility? It seems that in these areas Nelson is hard pressed to contribute universally applicable criteria for such an integrated male sexuality.



The ethic of justice and rights is depicted as being mainly concerned with the rights of individuals. It is concerned with objective observance that the rights of those individuals will not be interfered with by others. The ethic of justice and rights has come to be seen as an abstract formula of ethical decision making that does not define its own form of application, its own limits, and the degree to which it is binding.

The characteristics Nelson enumerates in his interpretation of male identity show that a more integrated masculine sexuality is one which is proportionally oriented toward an ethic of responsibility and care (penile energy), as well as a traditional orientation toward an ethic of justice and rights (phallic energy). The most eminent description of this ethic of care is seen in his description of the male who is both able to make as well as undergo an effect. This is the desire to care for and help others meet expectations of achievement and responsibilities, to show concern for others with feelings of compassion, to demonstrate responsible discernment and to work toward alleviating trouble in this world. An ethic of charity, does not, however, define its own form of application, its own limits, and the degree to which it is itself binding.

Nelson's suggestion that males must presently focus more on an ethic of charity does not, however, imply a difference in ethical positions, but rather, a difference in orientation. Unfortunately, Nelson's ascription to an ethic of caring in "concrete particular-

ity" rather than an ethic of "principled abstractions" (Kohlberg), does not lend itself to being repeated or verified by objective means. A male sexuality that posits both phallic and penile energy as differences in moral development must question, "When and how far one energy ought to be exerted over the other?" This is difficult to specify.

Nelson's shift of ethical orientation centers on a greater awareness of the embodied self as being related to one's awareness of other. In this sense, responsibility is seen as the mutual satisfaction of needs of self and other and is based on a tolerance for uniqueness as well as connectedness. It could be argued that Nelson's understanding is in fact a statement about identity formation rather than a statement about moral decision making.

From Kohlberg's perspective, Nelson's philosophical and theological commitments about identity formation are treated as if they are moral choices. They are in fact, more clearly, decisions about "ways" of life. Whether a male has a more phallic view of reality or a more penile view of reality is in fact not a moral decision, but a matter of enculturation. This can be seen contextually in how some males are more autonomously or rationally oriented while others are more sensitive and relationally oriented.

Nelson's considerations could be understood as concerns about morally neutral ego goals, such as the desire for a satisfying job

or the desire to avoid internal conflicts of the priority between job and the work place. Each of these decisions seem to be based more in a particular orientation rather than radically different ethical systems. Instead, Kohlberg would suggest many decisions involve the morally neutral balancing of different ego interests.

To summarize, then, the differences Nelson sees are not constitutive of two contrasting approaches to morality. They are really differences in moral orientation. An ethics of intimate relationships is more the result of social rather than task oriented interests. The problem of disentangling oneself in these cares and responsibilities is as much an issue of ego development as it is an issue involving many moral and non-moral decisions.

It may be true that males need to develop a side of ethics that focuses on penile energy, but this cannot supplant an ethic of phallic energy. It is plausible that through a growing sensitization men may recognize their relational needs, and may reach an individuated and related level of moral development. The living out of this sometimes conflictual message between autonomy and attachment in men's moral lives creates confusion in a number of contemporary sexual issues.

Contemporary Issues of Male Sexual Identity

Defining what it means to be a man and what it means to develop masculine moral behavior is complex. There is no average man on whom we can define masculine identity, sexuality, moral behavior, or gender roles. Diversity is the watchword for our lives and for the survival of the species, as it always has been. Kohlberg's perspective is an attempt to describe and prescribe a set of values by which male identity and moral development can be objectively understood. His theory reminds those concerned about the subject of moral development to consider the value of abstraction as a developmental task and autonomy as a developmental goal. Inasmuch as Kohlberg's principled thinking about the aspects of male sexual identity and behavior in the present culture can be substantiated, he makes a significant contribution in establishing objective means by which men can know themselves to be growing and maturing.

Nelson reminds us that male identity and masculine moral development is somewhat more complex than what Kohlberg has previously considered. Nelson suggests that male identity and masculine moral development must begin with body awareness. Body awareness for men means an equal recognition of both phallic and penile energy. Because much of the culture's attention has been given to a phallic way of acting (rational-linear thinking, achievement-production, externalization, and justice-rights orientation), Nelson suggests a re-evaluation of the significance of a

penile way of being (emotional-cyclical responses, relational-communicative interactions, and compassion and care orientation). It is particularly significant for men to appreciate and accept this often ignored and devalued bodily, sensate way of being if they are to be healed of the woundedness for which they most need and desire intimate connections with themselves and other human beings. To be aware of one's own biological givenness and to accept the implications of this nature, is the first step toward nurturing, more integrative, masculine ways of being and acting.

Whether Kohlberg or Nelson want to suggest that men are captives of conceptual, psychological frameworks or given physiological systems, their work suggests that when a redefinition of masculinity is to occur, one must be aware of both social constructs and biological determinants.<sup>112</sup> It may be that some conceptions of masculinity are more susceptible to ignoring sociological, physiological, psychological and theological perspectives than others.

Too often it seems that a particular historical definition of masculinity has been subjected to the trampoline effect of highs, lows, and rebounds, having no regard for the profound effects these fluctuations have had on identity, behavior, and relationships. The classical developmentalists who conceive masculinity as a purely social construct manipulating social environments, globally, and the

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<sup>112</sup>Perry Treadwell, "Biological Influences on Masculinity", in The Making of Masculinities, Harry Brod, ed., pp. 259-285.

classical biological determinists who invoke "innate" characteristics to explain male aggression and emotional evasion, create a pessimism about humanity's future.<sup>113</sup> Neither Kohlberg nor Nelson are within these categories. Those who see an evolving definition of masculinity in this culture as one that balances the interactions of physiology and environment in a continuous, expanding series of feedback loops are the optimists because, in this understanding of masculinity, interactions are communal, immediate, and possible.<sup>114</sup>

What it means to be male has developed over the millennia as an interactive process between what males were capable of doing and what males, as a class, determined they should do.<sup>115</sup> Men's concepts of what separated themselves from women have been emphasized while the constructs of what identifies them with women have been ignored and devalued. When both concepts begin to be valued for what they are: differences and similarities, rather than good or bad qualities; much more balanced, young men will emerge psychologically and physiologically more intimate and generative. The interactions of men and women will also enjoy an improving effect, enabling women to continue to make their own changes in the world.

From the preceding discussion of Nelson's critique of Kohlberg and Kohlberg's critique of Nelson, a return to the debate over the abstract principled ethic of justice and rights versus the concrete

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

relational ethic of responsibility and care confirms that an understanding of male sexuality and moral behavior is complex. Rather than debate one ethic over the other, it is more helpful to show how both traditions can be harmonized in an integrative fashion. The preceding dialogue has been, in fact, such an attempt: to understand the male sexual experience in both an analytic and synthesized way. What remains at hand is to apply this dialogue to concrete areas of male sexual experience. The following pages explore five areas in light of an integrative recognition of the contributions of Kohlberg and Nelson: pleasure, heterosexual relationship, friendship, fatherhood and mortality.

### Pleasure:

Because men have an inadequate understanding and consequent fear of eros, a more adequate understanding of play begins with a proper perspective on eroticism. Part of the problem with eros is that eros becomes genitalized. When eros is genitalized it centers around an act to be performed rather than a feeling to be experienced throughout the whole body. Another part of men's fear of eros is that it calls for men to let go of their control issues especially their "either/or" patterns and penchant for hierarchies.

A more adequate understanding of eros is in understanding it to be an emotion of longing for deep communion and connectedness of

our whole being. An erotic sensibility is one that can relax control needs and admit the desire for connection. When men are able to let go of their need for control they can allow themselves to speak the difficult words of limits: "I want..." "I can't..." "I need..." and "I'm afraid...". In short, to redefine eros means to recover men's ability to play or take pleasure with no achievement, agenda, task orientation or desire to prove oneself.<sup>116</sup>

For men, pleasure is the ability to recreate without the compulsion to achieve or win, and instead, to exist in the immediate moment without fear. As noted earlier, much of the male's experience of play is based on aggressiveness, competition, and performance. A more integrative view of pleasure includes the ability to compete without counting the cost and the score. Genuine desire for enhancing and appreciating the performance of self and other in a generative way redefines success.

One way is to see success as a personal satisfaction in "the attempt" to do one's best. Social, scientific research suggests that the "failure" and "inadequacy" felt by many American males is largely the result of unrealistic and unachievable social definitions of masculinity and success. The research concludes that achievement in the public world of sports and work does not deliver what is actually craved and needed: intimate connection and unity with other human beings.

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<sup>116</sup>Nelson, The Intimate Connection, pp. 57-59.



In order for a redefinition of success to take root, an instrumental project personality must be nurtured by a more affective generativity. This nurturance necessitates a more cooperative ethic among men. In turn, other young males will develop a balance between separation and attachment. An appreciation for intimate relationships with other men will develop without destructive and crippling competition and homophobia. With a more balanced, individuated, personality, young men will enjoy play for what it really is: the opportunity to engage in healthy exercise, to push oneself toward excellence, and to bond together with others in a challenging and enjoyable way.

By "playing the game for the sheer fun of it" rather than for profit, men will take themselves less seriously and appreciate the abilities of others. Dominance or control have no place. The re-establishment of this sense of pleasure, is the re-initiation of the feeling, "just being here is good enough". To feel good about being, bonding, and belonging, permits males to think about achieving, accomplishing, and actuating possibilities within themselves and within others in a more liberated manner. Body and soul are energized by the ability to accomplish, and are liberated by the ability to let be and let go.

### Heterosexual Relationship:

A re-evaluation of heterosexual relationship from an integrative point of view is the disestablishment of men relying on women for their total emotional, relational, and interior needs and of associating emotional needs and intimacy with genital activity.

The establishment of healthy heterosexual relationships sees these relationships as mutual, vulnerable and self-disclosing. This view of heterosexual friendship redefines autonomy as the appropriate establishment of interdependence. It recognizes the need of relationship for balanced self-actualization. Such an integrative, heterosexual friendship sees the other as a subject to be encountered rather than an object to be possessed. Such encounters know the limits of distance and closeness as well as appreciating and celebrating differences.

Integrative friendships also recognize the appropriate limits of dependence and independence. Autonomy, in this sense, establishes semi-permeable boundaries, allowing one to be open to the influence of another without fear of becoming absorbed by the other. Such heterosexual friendship respects and appreciates differences. It establishes complementarity and individuality of talents and limitations. To trust another, deeply and honestly, without fear of being consumed or rejected by the other, engenders a relational mode of being that encompasses purposeful individuation, and worthwhile

interactions. Such a mode of being recognizes the other as a person whom I need intellectually and desire emotionally.

### Same-Sex Friendship:

Establishing strong, male friendships redefines what it means to be a productive, generative male not so much as one who can make his mark on society, but one who has the capacity to be with, and to know, another person intimately. Such personal intimacy transcends taboos and admits that same sex attraction is natural and necessary for principled caring actions in the world.

To value authentic, male friendship is to recognize that men can be passive receivers as well as active givers. This friendship is based on the condition that men are aware of and can accept their own emotions rather than repress them. To have male friendships implies a principled thinking about sexist, patriarchally defined codes of masculinity in our society. To establish such principled thinking about men's relationships with other men generates broad thinking about how intimacy and self esteem are engendered.

A step in this direction is to re-think the attitudes and behaviors that have been labeled as traditionally feminine. For males to be vulnerable, to express a wide range of emotions, and to ask for help and support in appropriate situations, are steps toward such concrete principled action. This realization may, in turn,

foster new learning that men can be gentle, nurturant, cooperative, and communicative. This realization may also motivate non-violent means of resolving conflicts.

By accepting new attitudes, full male development is one that will reduce the likelihood of pervasive societal pathologies of homophobia and misogyny. Certain traditional qualities like courage, physical strength, and autonomy should also be promoted as positive qualities, provided that they are not manifested in obsessive, exploitative, or dominating ways. Friendships which are rooted in a combination of those just mentioned will foster more cultural healing of the distant father-son relationship.

#### Father-Son Relationships:

A synthesis of Kohlberg's and Nelson's frameworks envisions a father-son relationship that is more intimately connected to providing care for children as well as fostering mentor-hero relationships. Such a vision of fatherhood does not denigrate the father's sense of autonomy and achievement. Rather, it attempts to heal the wound of the absent father.

In this view, a father's autonomy and achievement are not an abdication of one's responsibility for another. Such fatherhood engenders qualities that simultaneously allow sons to see realities greater than one's own life and a presence to the concrete existence

of struggle and growth, pain and hope. The stringent belief that a father's love and respect must be earned is relaxed. An integrated sense of fatherhood allows men to take the traditional role of breadwinner less seriously and facilitates taking a more active nurturing and caretaking stance toward their sons.

The achievement of ego stability for young men requires the guidance of wise, experienced, men who believe in the possibility of relational power, rather than acquisitional power. Fatherhood, in this regard, confirms that to discover purpose in life is not in being the doer of great deeds inasmuch as it is being a person who knows himself intimately. This type of father is the male archetype young men need for providing legitimate, safe means for sexual exploration.

A fatherhood that knows when to withhold opportunities for responsibility as well as when to promote the commitment to responsibility is one that can draw upon the life affirming sources of self and others.

To permit young men to admit that they desire closeness with their fathers and to affirm that identity cannot be achieved alone, in a hurry, or in the purely abstract, revitalizes men who are able to cry and to grieve a wounded-father image. To be able to grieve the wounded-father image that lies behind this culture's experience of masculinity is a step toward the fuller realization of what it

might take to find a relationship that can flexibly confirm, confront and celebrate one another.

### Mortality:

Integrating a new meaning of death in the masculine experience needs more principled thinking. Part of a new way of thinking about this life and its end includes an understanding of the human body. To recover an awareness of the body, its rhythms and cycles, and its place in mediating emotion, rather than denying emotion, means to appreciate bodily changes. To appreciate final bodily changes admits to "not knowing" what a "life beyond" is. Death is the final defeat of hardness and performance, mastery and winning.

What a man's body tells him is that his life is connected to the lives of others and limited in length. To see the connection of this life means an affirmation of men's own bodily, sensate experiences. The limits of man's body shows him that in accepting finitude, rather than violently repressing it, a more healthy way of being can occur.

An integration of the connection and limits of this life is the value of interdependence in action. The recovery of interdependence is the recovery of trust. The recovery of trust is the recovery of the processes and cycles of nature. These recoveries bind the connections between men's emotional and cognitive experiences.

Male principled thinking about life and mortality frees men. It frees men to begin letting go of a former conception of life in order to embrace a new one.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEFINING MALE SEXUAL IDENTITY: AN ONGOING PROCESS

#### Introduction

This thesis has articulated one man's integration of what it means to be male in the American Christian Culture. This integration has centered on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and James Nelson in identifying their perspectives of what it means to develop a masculine identity and moral behavior. This thesis has maintained that there is a duality in man's experience which gives rise to a complex, but complimentary view of how men might integrate their rational and emotional experiences in a way that recognizes deeply male energy. This thesis has maintained that for men to be truly generative in this present culture they must find ways to become more aware of themselves and more intimate with others.

Too often the dualities of mind-body, reason and emotion, nature and spirit have become controlling dualisms which, at times, consciously and unconsciously, have affected the way men make meaning of their bodily, sensate experiences and their rational, decision-making processes. The issues of pleasure, heterosexual relationships, same-sex friendship, fatherhood and mortality have



been explored to find ways in which males may be both generative and intimate, autonomous and connected, linear and cyclic. Keys to re-defining the manner in which these issues are viewed in the culture are through principled, moral thinking and sensitive, bodily awareness.

### The Challenge for Further Research

What remains is the commitment to more research to find ways in which males might appreciate, in a healthy ratio, both phallic achievement and penile presence. Such critical research will challenge cultural assumptions of what it means to be male and employ imaginative means that recognize male's distinctive sexual identity and complex moral behavior.

Specifically, research that focuses on the connection of feeling and thinking processes in the male will be helpful to assess more peaceful and productive ways of relating. To facilitate this acknowledgement of feelings, imaginative means will affirm and validate males for their efforts to be in touch with the meaning of their own embodiment. The more men listen to the feelings of tiredness, pain and isolation, the more they will conceive new ways of economic and political life that are based on an equitable sharing of goods, rather than an exploitative hierarchy of distribution.

Research that examines how the roots of sexual alienation contribute to expressions of violence, militarism, racism and ecological abuse should also be promoted. A military socialization that reflects a systematically humane treatment of their recruits will provide opportunities for positive sensitization rather than a present deprivation of feeling for "the enemy". When males are given this opportunity, new conceptions of the connections among human lives can be fostered.

More active and imaginative approaches for male intimacy and masculine generativity can be realized by research that encourages the right brain capacities of men in this culture. By right brain capacities I mean sensate and intuitive ways of relating that synthesizes, affirms, and celebrates patterns of achievement and interdependence. An active and imaginative research toward male sexuality will refuse to embrace a gulf between males and females, human beings and the remainder of the universe. It will also reject pervasive, dualistic ways of thinking. A more active and imaginative male research will be one that sees continuity and connection as an equal partner to the traditional discontinuity and disconnection consciousness.

Specifically, more active and imaginative approaches to male sexuality means that men can no longer assume the stance of "generic man". To underscore the importance of recognizing males as having distinctive sexual identity and behaviors does not denigrate the at-

tempt to understand females. Rather, it recognizes that diversity and complementarity are the primary means by which dualities in the world can be understood and integrated.

Research that continues to integrate biological determinants and social learning that help adults to teach their children about sexuality may also help adults implement publicly, active strategies and imaginative planning for future generations.

What also becomes the task of future research and imagination is how males might find ways to integrate the consequence and values of penile energy with what has been a traditional predominance of phallic energy and achievement and to do this without polarization. One suggestion in the area of pleasure is a cultural re-definition of success. Research that focuses on professional athletes and the privileged status this culture bestows on athletes may help the culture itself to gain a more balanced view toward winning and participating.

One suggestion in the area of heterosexual relationships is a re-evaluation of care and nurturance as peculiarly feminine qualities. For the culture to find appropriate rituals and rites of passage by which males may less problematically and traumatically assert their biological and psychological differences from mothers may decelerate the need for them to seek this rite of passage in adolescence with the opposite sex. It may also allow young men to

see young women as different and unique persons to be encountered; not as mere objects of desire or as a means to genital fulfillment.

Key to re-negotiating male sexuality in same-sexed relationships is more present and nurturant fathers. Re-definitions in the corporate world that restructure the meaning of productivity can be helpful. Efforts that show productivity as a function of job satisfaction and job performance can also show these as functions of more personal satisfying relationships at home and in the work place. Efforts toward establishing just wages are also a worthwhile factor in these considerations.

Another area of interest is to collate research that studies the effects of young men who have real, caring and nurturing relationships with their fathers. How this can best extend to relationships with other males, even in the competitive business world may also prove fruitful. Research that focuses on the relaxation of taboos against male emotional expressiveness towards one another, outside athletic endeavors, may also be small glimpses of the immeasurable possibilities of generative male friendships. Research that focuses on cultural attitudes of homophobia and misogyny are also ways in which teleological, cultural formulations of institutional hierarchies can be challenged.

A research that addresses the connections of men's letting go of the traditional arrangement of gender relations and the need to

dominate and control may show that more realistic possibilities of men's views toward mortality exist. In this regard, research from medical technology that recognizes the difference between allowing persons to die and seeing death as a personal defeat may help men and women to emotionally integrate their professional limits, rather than staving off these limits at any cost, regardless of the quality of life.

Research that addresses the correlation between men's violent fascinations of death and and fear of death may indicate ways males can let go of aggressive, tough and dominant self identities. The more males are given permission to know new alternatives and feel again, the more likely they will be able to face their own limits and their fear of death. Men may then be allowed to know that they can be emotional and vulnerable with themselves and with others.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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